

WHAT PRICE VITAMIN B? A REPORT on the NUTRITION CONFERENCE

by Eva Lapin

NEW MASSES

FIFTEEN CENTS A COPY

JUNE 10, 1941

FDR CREATES AN EMERGENCY

By the Editors

MR. LASKI BENDS THE KNEE

What he means by a new world order. By A. B. Magil

LOUIS FISCHER'S CONFESSION

By Isidor Schneider

IT'S A NATURAL

The success story of Local 65. By Ernest Moorer

Between Ourselves

WRITING this on the eve of press day, we look forward to the time when, all deadlines having been hurdled and the next issue started on its way, we are free to participate in the Fourth American Writers Congress which is being held concurrently with the Congress of American Writers and opens Friday evening, June 6. All of NM's editorial staff belongs to the League of American Writers and we intend to be on hand for as many sessions as possible. It's a beautiful program, opening with the Friday night mass meeting in "Defense of Culture" and proceeding throughout the weekend with special sessions on writers' problems. In our editorial on page 19 we have tried to indicate the special nature and importance of these problems in this time. If you have a copy of the congress agenda, you know what a variety of subjects it covers—and what a full array of writers will present them. All sessions are open to the public. We hope to see you!

A curious reader wrote in to ask, among other things, why in announcing articles we make a distinction between those "on hand" and "in type." The only distinction, if you must know, exists in the minds of editors and printers and its importance might be described as subjective. The one we're announcing this week, for early publication, is of the in-type category—a very fine study by Herbert Biberman, the Hollywood director whose writing has appeared in NM before, of Dorise Nielsen, Canada's progressive woman MP. Mr. Biberman recently visited Canada and interviewed Miss Nielsen as well as a number of people who are acquainted with her valiant work for civil liberties.

Another reader is curious to know why we don't concentrate more on a "mass base" of subscriptions instead of contributions to our Fund Drive. The answer, as constant readers are probably aware, is that the Drive is necessary once a year; meanwhile the efforts to build circulation go on month in and month out. With this issue we publish our final appeal in the current campaign for funds. And we ask you to give a hand in the circulation drive. Introduce your friends to NM; try them out on the thirteen-weeks-for-\$1 offer. More often than not, an introduction is all that's needed.

That weekend "exodus to the beaches" which newspaper headlines chronicle every Monday means different things to different people. To some it's just getting out of town and cooling off. Others prefer some

real entertainment with their relaxation. The latter are finding it at camps and other resorts where there are theatricals, skits, revues, etc. Very often these productions are the original work of progressive groups which turn out some remarkably lively and provocative forms of entertainment. This summer we plan to give you a report on these productions, reviewing the more notable drama and publishing the words and music of the best songs.

NM offers its readers a weekend of their own, June 20-22, at Camp Colebrook, Colebrook River, Conn., in the Berkshire hills. The camp covers 320 acres and consists of cabins built around a mountain lake. For sports there will be fishing, swimming, boating, badminton, tennis, and handball. For entertainment: a revue on Saturday night and dancing to a swing band; chalk talk by well known cartoonist and a piano recital by a concert artist. There will be two after-breakfast talks—Samuel Sillen on books and writers, and Joy Davidman on what makes Hollywood click. The total cost of the weekend, which runs from Friday evening to Sunday evening, is \$10, and special transportation arrangements will reduce the fare to a minimum.

A correspondent in a "middle-size city on the South" suggests that we print an article on the "undercover forms" of anti-Semitism these days. "For a while after the war began," he writes, "the 'hate the Jews' crowd here quieted down considerably. I suppose they felt it was 'bad taste' to be yelling about how we should fight Hitler and still parroting his racial theories. So they substituted some 'hate the Hun' screaming. But they weren't any friendlier to us (I am a Jew) than they had been before. And in a few months' time they were making little cracks out of the sides of their mouths when they passed us. First, though, I should explain that until three years ago these men had vented almost all their ugly hatreds on the Negroes—until there was an organizing drive by the CIO, which sent in 'outside agitators' (at the workers' request) to help establish a union. Then the employers began to yell 'New York Jews,' although the two organizers were from the West and only one was Jewish. Recently there has been the possibility of a strike against speedup, and the anti-Semitic talk is getting louder. Even so, it isn't as open or violent as before September 1939. This sort of thing can be done in other ways: by asking pointed

personal questions of job applicants; by whispers; by social cold-shouldering; by private conversation that somehow becomes public enough to reach the victims of these 'just between us' diatribes. Some make a pretense of friendliness when they come to us with their aid-to-Britain collection boxes, but more often their appeals sound rather like threats. A few days ago I overheard a revival of that old line, 'Of course Hitler's done some terrible things but you must admit that he's solved the Jewish problem. . . .' It's a funny thing, isn't it—these 'democratic' warriors picking the most horrible thing the Nazis have done and imitating it?"

Who's Who

EVA LAPIN is a free lance writer and the wife of Adam Lapin, NM's Washington correspondent. . . Ernest Moorer is a New York newspaperman. . . Isidor Schneider was

formerly literary editor of NM, and is the author of *From the Kingdom of Necessity*. . . Lynd Ward is an artist and the author of several books, including *Wild Pilgrimage*, a novel in woodcuts.

Flashbacks

WHAT TYLER's peasant rebellion began June 10, 1381, with the seizure of Canterbury in England. . . Tom Paine, chief pamphleteer and agitator of the American Revolution, died June 8, 1809, in Greenwich Village, a group of houses a mile north of the city of New York. The following day the author of *Common Sense* was followed to his grave by a single coach full of mourners, among whom were two Negroes. . . Having been found guilty of "conspiracy to injure trade and commerce," twenty New York tailors were sentenced on June 6, 1836, to go to jail or pay a heavy fine. They had struck for higher wages and a ten-hour day.

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Two weeks' notice is required for change of address. Notification sent to NEW MASSES rather than to the post office will give the best results.

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FDR CREATES AN EMERGENCY

What the President meant when he said "unlimited." A program to undermine the American family, plunge the nation into chaos and greater poverty. An editorial article.

THERE were no crowds lining the route of the presidential Pullman as it sped toward Hyde Park last weekend. The Stars and Stripes were out on the front lawns, and from the second story windows, but that was for a different occasion: there was no flag-waving for Mr. Roosevelt. The enthusiasm for this unlimited national emergency is very limited, to put it mildly. Only in the newspaper headlines is there any excitement. Among the common folk, deep among the masses, there is a sense of having been tricked. For those who knew where things were going in these last ten months, for those who were speaking up, fighting against the stream, the "declaration of an undeclared war" comes as no surprise. But among the people who believed the President, the realization grows that he has led them all down a dark stairway, to the quicksands of national disaster. It is a wholly unconvinced people which the President is driving into war. Here is the President's first, great, hollow victory that will, in the end, rank his name among the hated names of American history.

In his speech last week he did not say much that was new: it was what his advisers, his gramophones, and all the phony committees have been saying up and down the country for a year and more. He did not say it with particular conviction: on the contrary, the talk, for those who heard it, lacked fire in delivery, lacked decision. Many of the significant things lay in what was unspoken: for example, the failure to make any striking references to Japan is already widely interpreted to mean that some kind of deal has been concluded between Washington and Tokyo. If all these stories in the press are not just trial balloons, the American people get a glimpse into the hardboiled calculations behind the sonorous language. The President's reference to "defending democracy" in China stands exposed in all its hypocrisy: in actual fact, the men who are running this country do not give a hoot for democracy in China; they fear the emergence of a democratic China and that is why they are so antagonistic to the unity of the Chinese people, to the great Communist Party of fighting China. What they are concerned with is to keep Japan "bogged down," as they put it. And after settling scores with Germany and Great Britain, they will try, as they did at the Washington conference in 1922, to put both China and Japan in their place of proper subservience to American imperialism.

AMONG the many *nuances* of the fireside chat was the deferential way in which Mr. Roosevelt treated his upper-class opposition, the men who pull the strings behind the America First Committee. The whole speech

was couched in terms of "self-interest," and by comparison with previous addresses the embroidery of the "four freedoms," about bringing democracy "everywhere in the world," was noticeably restrained. Agreeing with the America First outfit that the hemisphere must be the sole domain of the United States, irrespective of how the Latin-American or the Canadian people feel about it, Mr. Roosevelt politely pressed forward his argument that the hemisphere should be defended at a distance. It was as though he were insisting with his good friends, Joe Kennedy and Herbert Hoover and Alfred Landon, that he is really driving a very hard bargain with the British, not letting them pull any wool over his eyes. Between himself and the America First Committee, there are differences of strategy, of timing, of self-confidence. Roosevelt wishes to advance the interests of American imperialism by keeping the British from any deals with Hitler, by risking a certain weakening of German imperialism, fully confident that he can deal with Japan, handle the American people, and replace Germany's control of central Europe with gentlemen more subservient to London and Washington, at the same time preventing the onward march of socialism. His opposition is less confident and fears its own inability to control the outcome of a prolonged war. It would "let well enough alone"; it would clear British big business out of the hemisphere and prepare for a showdown with Hitler at some later stage, hoping in the meantime that he will exhaust his energies in the steppes eastwards.

But by making "self-interest" the major basis of his argument, the President leaves himself open at a most vulnerable point, a point of which the America First Committee is not in a position to take advantage. It is not so much a physical invasion which confronts us, the President admitted (thereby giving the lie to his own hysterics of last summer); it is the prospect of being outflanked economically, of economic encirclement. "We do not eat all the food we produce; we do not burn all the oil we can pump, we do not use all the goods we can manufacture," was the way he phrased it. From which it follows that we must prevent the Nazis from "parceling out" the world, from grabbing the markets and colonial territories which American imperialism itself must have. And unless we do, the President states by way of an alternative, "the whole fabric of [our] working way of life as we know it . . . would be mangled and crippled" . . . involving a "permanent conscription of our man power" . . . the curtailment of "funds we could spend on education, on housing, on public works, on flood control, on health . . . pouring our resources into armaments."

In these few sentences, when you think about them, and in the only alternative which he foresees, lies the secret of the crisis which is now wracking the world. Herein lies the real nature of this war. In the implications of the President's own logic lie the strongest reasons for *opposing* his policies, as well as the alternatives with which he confronts us. Never was the contrasting hope of socialism more clearly implied.

FOR what do these words mean? It is a curious fact that when he says we must fight this war to sell our goods, or else be shut into "Chinese walls of isolation," he is saying something which must sound painfully familiar to the peoples of Italy, Japan, and Germany. They have heard such talk before, in their own tongues. Mussolini told the Italian people that they must abide by his will, that they could not remain a people unless they broke out of the Mediterranean. In Japan, at this very moment, people are being told that Japan will not attack "except in self-defense," and what they must defend is humorlessly called the "greater east Asia co-prosperity sphere" for which a million men have already given their lives. It was Hitler who bludgeoned the great German people into fascism and war on the theory that Germany was being encircled, that all Europe was its *lebensraum*—living space—, that Germany must "export or die." In other words, *each ruling class told its people precisely the same thing*—applied against the other side, anointed with the holy words of "defense," "vital living space," "way of life." Once the situation is approached in this fashion, *once the world crisis is seen as a whole*, it becomes clear that the common peoples of all countries are being miserably hoodwinked and deceived, that each belligerent is really fighting to parcel out the world, to sell the food it cannot consume, the goods it cannot dispose of. This is nothing but a continuation of a previous armed struggle, and it is only a military expression of a continual struggle that has been going on for most of the century. It is a war for mastery of the colonial areas, for control over subject peoples; it is a war in which German imperialism is colonizing Europe the way Britain and France and the United States have colonized the rest of the globe, and each belligerent now fights to dispossess the other. It is a war made more desperate since one-sixth of the earth is free of the conflict which the imperialists tried to palm off at the expense of the Soviet Union, but which they are now compelled to fight among themselves.

But why do we not consume the food we produce? *Is everyone so well fed among us?*

Why do we not use the goods of our capacious factories? *Is there no need for these goods any longer?* To ask these questions is to probe the chink in the Roosevelt armor, all the more so since it was Roosevelt only a few short years ago who asked (though he never answered) these questions. And the answer is terrifyingly simple. It is because the men who *own* the food the people produce, the men who *own* the goods the masses make with their toil can no longer sell these goods at a profit within their own borders: they have so lowered the standard of living and are daily suppressing purchasing power by contrast with the expansion of technical capacity, they have so conquered the markets of the backward areas that they are now impelled to convert the entire nation into an arsenal for the purpose of gaining exclusive domination of the world's markets. Each imperialism is doing likewise, depending on its specific history and development. Thus, we are brought to a murderous insanity: that while the masses are deprived of the goods they produce, they are asked to give their lives so that these goods can be sold competitively in distant lands! What an abysmal paradox this is: that on every side want and misery and hunger must continue, and every energy must be diverted to destruction in order to defeat other peoples who are similarly wracked by want and misery and hunger, whose energies are similarly diverted to destruction! What a miserable perspective flows from Mr. Roosevelt's thesis: millions shall give their lives to perpetuate an abominable social system so obviously antagonistic to the needs and desires of the millions, so glaringly in the interests of that handful in every land who have their grip on the instruments of production.

AND when the President projects an alternative, he speaks of it as though it were somehow different in principle from the course he is now pursuing. He speaks of permanently mobilizing our man power, reducing social services, militarizing the nation as though that were a necessary eventuality of some far-distant future, the inevitable consequences of the *failure* to adopt his policies. But what does the President think is actually happening today, as a *direct consequence* of his policies? Is he not mobilizing our man power, and does not every mother dread what any sergeant knows—namely that this will be a permanent mobilization? Is he not reducing public works, crippling education . . . was it not his secretary Harold Ickes who numbed the nation last week with the suggestion of gasoline-less Sundays and shortages of electric power—this in a nation which produces sixty percent of the world's oil, which has waterfalls and coal in abundance? Was it not A. W. Glancy, a dollar a year man in the OPM (his speech was quoted in our Readers Forum last week), who predicted "these production facilities for war must not be dismantled as they were after the last war, but must remain permanently and become an ac-

tual part of our lives. . . ." Is it not clear that it is Mr. Roosevelt's program which subverts the national economy, undermines the American family, promises us an unholy reign of force and violence?

It is in fact one of the most obscene hypocrisies of this whole performance that the President speaks of saving our democracy while we defend it. How hollow these words sound to average New York or Pennsylvania school teachers, who find that even before the war has formally begun, a savage assault has been instituted against their democratic trade union and the educational system. How much of this democratic heritage will be left if the war mongers continue to "save our democracy by thus defending it"? It is one of the most damnable ironies of the whole national scene that contemptible creatures like Martin Dies are permitted to harass decent people in the name of "defending democracy" and "eradicating the fifth column"—that cheap racketeer, Martin Dies, who like so many of his fellow congressmen, has been elected to his post by a minority of the southern people, as a result of the disfranchisement of white and Negro citizens!

And if collective bargaining is a cornerstone of our democracy, what does the working man think of a President who commands "no strikes" in the "defense" industries—when it is clear that virtually every industry has become an adjunct of the "defense" program, when it is clear that workers go on strike, not because they want to, but because they must have higher wages to meet the skyrocketing cost of living, better conditions to give their lives dignity and meaning. What does democracy begin to mean when the President deliberately circumvents the laws of the land and gathers dictatorial powers into his own hands, when the President deliberately betrays his spoken pledges?

It is because there is such a yawning gap between rhetoric and reality that millions of Americans become increasingly suspicious, resentful, antagonistic to the administration's policies. They are probing deeply into the very nature of our society. When they observe, as in the west coast shipping strike, that the employers get the Navy to do the strikebreaking at the command of a whistle, millions of people make the connection between the rule of the employer in the mill and shop, and the rule of the employer in the Congress and in the White House. And this realization will continue, will deepen. In the face of what is happening to their lives, millions will break through the chicanery of the President's alternatives and seek out others.

FOR there is another alternative. There is a way of preventing the advance of fascism in the United States without succumbing to fascism from abroad. There is another way of producing food, another way of pumping oil, another way of manufacturing goods—a better way, a way that dispenses with all the profiteers, the jingoes. There is a way called socialism, which has demonstrated for

200,000,000 people on one-sixth of the earth that goods can be disposed of without wars, that there is no such thing as excess goods at all. Twenty years of socialism, in the face of obstacles that a socialist America would not have, demonstrate *conclusively* that peace and plenty can go together, that democracy and peace can go together, that democracy becomes genuine for the millions only when there is plenty for the millions. This is the real and only alternative to Mr. Roosevelt's policies. And were we living in Germany, this would be the only alternative to Mr. Hitler's policies. Indeed, the masses of Europe are hardly waiting for Mr. Roosevelt to liberate them. One of the President's many hollow victories before his career is over will be to discover that the peoples whom he asks us to save will find their liberation from among themselves.

WHAT is the obligation of honest men and women in this unlimited emergency? What shall we do, as this oligarchy and its venal servants defies the popular will and takes us deeper into a desperate and miserable slaughter? True patriots, in the opinion of NEW MASSES, will not be swept aside by panic. They will stand their ground, maintaining their organizations and helping maintain and defend the organizations of the people. Men of letters and the arts will continue to replenish the mainstream of a democratic culture, keeping it true to the deepest aspirations, the worthiest passions of the people. Educators will continue to inspire the youth, keeping the torch of scientific method, the heritage of centuries in strong hands. Labor, the backbone of the progressive movement, will press forward, challenging the hard-faced men behind their fortifications, as only labor can.

Those who know the inexhaustible energies of the American working class, by contrast with the palsied fevers which wrack our rulers, those who have seen what working men can do—whether it be in cracking Henry Ford, or in defending the Teachers Union, or in building socialism in the Soviet Union—they know the indestructible power which lies in organization and unity. It becomes the essence of patriotism, the essence of humanity to explain again and again what millions realize in a still fragmentary and instinctive way—that socialism alone holds the way out. Socialism can be realized much quicker and at cheaper price than the mirage of victory which our rulers pursue on the shores of Africa, on the islands that were pirated from native peoples. Earl Browder told the anniversary meeting of NEW MASSES readers earlier in the year: "There is such a growing opinion, knowledge, culture, understanding, intellectual power in the masses of America that the most powerful reactionary regime can never cut it out." This is our guidepost through and beyond the unlimited emergency, an emergency which was not of the people's making, and shall be their rulers' undoing.

THE EDITORS.

June 10, 1941 NM

COME HELL OR HIGH-WATER

Dear Reader:

Three months ago we began our annual financial drive. We planned to close it the first of June. We hoped that we would raise \$25,000—the total amount necessary to meet our annual deficit. We want to thank our readers for their response, knowing what calls are made upon them from progressive organizations of all sorts; knowing too, that our readers, like ourselves, are poor people.

Your response has enabled us to pull through the first six months of this hard year of 1941. Without your aid, this magazine could not have continued. We regret, however, to inform you that we are \$7,400 short of our goal. The total sent us by our friends reached \$17,600.

This past week contributions amounted only to \$200. We know the vacation season has come on and that is the most difficult part of the year to expect funds. We therefore want to end this drive with the current issue—despite our need for the \$7,400 which would meet all our obligations and see us through until next February when the annual drive begins.

We shall have to scrape and borrow during the summer months, hoping that loans will pull us through the July-August doldrums. We shall do our best, try to carry on as usual. We had hoped not to face the need for another financial drive in the autumn. We may have to.

Though we close this drive in the magazine, we shall continue it outside these pages. We shall urge our friends to run summer parties, to continue raising funds personally, to find new readers, new subscribers. We hope that any of you who have not yet sent the magazine a contribution, will do so immediately; that any of you who can send a loan to the magazine will do so. We have thousands of readers who have not chipped in. And to them we say that it is not too late—in fact, now is the time—more so than ever.

So, dear reader, keep your magazine in mind. If NM ceases to raise the financial bugaboo that faces us constantly, it is not because the need does not exist. It is there. And we hope you will keep it in mind in the furious weeks to come.

Again, deepest thanks for the support you have given the only weekly publication that is pledged—come hell or high-water—to carry on for peace and democracy. We know you will fight on with us, side by side.

THE EDITORS.

WHAT PRICE VITAMIN B?

A report on the national nutrition conference. Why 45,000,000 Americans are undernourished. Eva Lapin describes the mystery of adequate diets without adequate income.

Washington.

ONE of the delegates to the National Nutrition Conference for Defense told this story. A home economist was teaching a group of women how to cook bones and get the most out of them. At the end of the demonstration one of the women got up and said: "What we want to know is who got the meat on the bones." And that simple and direct question could just as well be asked about the nutrition conference held in Washington last week. There is no doubt that the nation's physicians, dietitians, and nutritionists possess the scientific knowledge and ability to wipe out malnutrition. But what they haven't answered is where the 45,000,000 undernourished Americans are going to get the money to buy the proper food.

Why did the administration go to the trouble of calling the conference? Because it claims that it is worried about the high rate of rejections for the Army, about the ability of workers in defense industries to stand the strain of speed up and overtime. And at the same time it is hopeful that Vitamin B will give the American people the energy and vitality to pull through present and future "sacrifices." Army officials are alarmed, so they say, over the fact that forty percent of the draftees have been rejected as physically unfit for military service. In the last war the percentage of those either deferred for limited classification or rejected entirely was thirty-one percent. It is unlikely that future draftees will be much healthier. Brig. Gen. Lewis B. Hershey, Selective Service chief, revealed that 380,000 out of 1,000,000 applicants were found unfit for general military service, and "that perhaps one-third . . . [rejections] was due either directly or indirectly to nutritional deficiencies." Teeth accounted for twenty percent of the rejections, and decayed teeth are often traced to poor diet.

Hershey, of course, is worried about bad health because it enables many a draftee to escape military training. "In the interest of public morale these individuals should be compelled to render service to the nation," he said. From a long-range point of view he favored the Nazi method of emphasizing brawn above brain. "Our educational system must place the youth who has developed a perfect, healthy body on a plane above the scholarship giant who in reaching this goal has ruined his eyes, his digestion, and his health in general."

One of the most important discussions which took place at the conference was on nutrition of workers in "defense" industries. A number of government and army officials attended this section, and Lieutenant Colonel Howe of the War Department stated that he was worried about fatigue and how to overcome it "over and above simply getting adequate diet." Britain's problem of what to do

about workers exhausted from the strain of long hours was very much in the minds of administration officials. Among the recommendations made by the conference was supplemental feeding of workers in defense plants, wherever necessary, to fortify them against fatigue. "Ill-health results in a slowing down of industrial production," Surgeon General Thomas Parran told the delegates, "a danger to military strength, and a lowering of the morale of millions." This same note of the need for toughening up the people was sounded in speech after speech by administration officials. Secretary of Agriculture Claude R. Wickard said "better nutrition does not mean soft living. On the contrary, it means becoming harder, more efficient, better able to do without luxuries that we have to."

ON the eve of the conference the Food and Nutrition Committee of the National Research Council announced an ideal diet for the American people, both as to calory content and vitamins, thiamin, nicotinic acid, and riboflavin. Dr. Lydia Roberts translated the proposed "yardstick" into the following simple terms: "one pint of milk for an adult and more for a child; a serving of meat, and cheaper cuts are just as nutritious; one egg or some suitable substitute such as navy beans; two vegetables, one of which should be green, or yellow; two fruits, one of which should be rich in Vitamin C, found abundantly in citrus fruits and tomatoes; breads, flour and cereal, most or preferably all whole grain or enriched; some butter or oleomargarine with Vitamin A added; other foods to satisfy the appetite." Undoubtedly this is an adequate diet. But the important question is how low-income families, who need good nutrition most, can afford to buy the food suggested. Surgeon-General Parran admitted that they could not.

The only broad study of what American families eat was conducted by the Bureau of Home Economics in 1935-36. From it emerged the startling fact that more than three-fourths of the American people do not have an adequate diet. Although the Bureau estimated that in 1936 an adequate diet for an adult would require an expenditure of \$2.10 per week, the study revealed that

families with income under \$500 a year spent only approximately \$1.25 per adult each week, and that more than 60 percent of their total income went for food expenditures. Dr. Hazel K. Stiebeling, in charge of the Bureau of Home Economics study, admitted that the diet used in her study was not as adequate as the one just announced. But she estimated that even this not altogether adequate diet would cost \$2.10 per week in 1936. And with food prices up sharply, an adequate diet now would probably cost over \$2.50 per week.

Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins supplied even more definite figures when she said that for a family of four (two children eight and nine years old) a diet recommended as adequate by home economists would cost \$9.40 a week. And in order to be able to spend \$9.40 a week for food and still have enough money for other living expenses, the family would need a yearly income of \$1,430. Against this estimate consider the Department of Agriculture's statement that "in 1935-36, in addition to families receiving public assistance, there were 33,100,000 persons in families with income under \$1,000." Even Secretary Perkins felt compelled to say in this connection that "in my opinion, however, the fundamental problem is economic."

But the 45,000,000 undernourished Americans are receiving very little aid from the Roosevelt administration to enable them to get better diets. The Department of Agriculture estimated that in March of this year, through the combined food stamp plan, direct distribution of surplus commodities, free school lunches and low-cost milk, government aid was reaching only 11,739,343 people. This leaves three-fourths of the malnourished Americans uncared for. There are 27,000,000 school children in America today, but only 4,700,000 are being reached by free school lunches. The Department of Agriculture has said that in 1936 there were "approximately 9,000,000 school children suffering from malnutrition in this country."

The official recommendations of the conference, adopted after the President had declared a full national emergency, were very vague and for the most part dealt with education on nutrition and encouraged continued research. There can be little disagreement with the technical and scientific discussions and proposals of the conference. As a matter of fact even Dr. Morris Fishbein of the reactionary hierarchy of the American Medical Association, made a contribution. He felt it necessary to add a word of warning to the public not to fall for the vitamin preparations on the market. He said that many of them were below standard and harmful when taken without the advice of a physician. The vitamin business has now reached the total



of \$100,000,000 yearly and there is the usual amount of fraud and chicanery going on. Secretary Perkins said that one of the "government departments had reports of a concern selling synthetic vitamins advertised to make permanent waves stay in longer, and to keep polish from chipping off from fingernails."

On extension of government aid, the conference recommendations were again vague and although they called for "full use of any practical devices, such as the so-called Stamp Plan, free school lunches, and low-cost milk distribution which will bring nourishing, adequate meals to those who could not otherwise afford them," they offered no real suggestions on whether the aid should be given to all families on relief, to families with incomes under \$1,000, to needy rural families or to other groups. So on the only present practical solution of the problem of malnutrition—government aid—the conference muffed the ball.

THE meeting was shot through with contradictions which barred any real solution to malnutrition. Obviously malnutrition does not exist in a vacuum. Whether a family can have a healthy diet depends upon whether the head of the family has a job, upon how much rent has to be paid, upon what clothes have to be bought. The conference had to consider raising the standard of living of the people as a whole, not only raising their intake of vitamins. As one delegate noted, a meal chockful of vitamins and minerals would still not insure health if it were eaten in a slum.

And then the conference met against the background of the administration's "defense" program which puts military needs above those of the civilian population. It was revealed by none other than the chairman of the conference, Paul McNutt, Federal Security Administrator, that priorities were hampering the campaign to put vitamins into every American's diet. Discussing the new standards for flour, which is now to be enriched with Vitamin B-1, McNutt noted that there is a shortage of riboflavin, one of the most important ingredients. He said that "there is not now the productive capacity necessary to produce the riboflavin necessary for such enrichment." Although new standards set up by the government usually go into effect in ninety days, the flour standards have been delayed until Jan. 1, 1942. And even by January 1, McNutt said that "it is quite possible that adequate productive capacity for this and other needs may not be available." The Office of Production Management has to be consulted as "the kinds of construction necessary will involve negotiation as to priorities." Another factor in this situation according to McNutt is that "the amount of riboflavin and other vitamins available for the millers may depend to some extent on the requirements of Britain."

The possibility that Americans will have to go without certain foods or pay outrageous prices for them because of shipments to Britain cannot be overlooked. Meanwhile

dairy prices have begun to climb and every housewife has had to pay two or three cents more for a pound of butter in the last month.

The makeup of the conference provides additional explanation of the vague recommendations. Delegates were invited on the basis of lists submitted by government agencies, and arrangements were made by Paul McNutt's office, inasmuch as he bears the imposing title of Coordinator of Health, Welfare and Related Defense Activities. The 900 participants were largely doctors, dentists, teachers, home economists, social workers, government executives, professional nutritionists, dietitians, representatives of the food industry, and a very small sprinkling of labor, consumer and Negro delegates.

The important section of the conference on Nutrition Problems in Distribution and Processing of Foods was headed by Hector Lazo. He is chairman of the Food Procurement Advisory Committee, in the Purchasing Commission, Office of Emergency Management. In briefer words, Lazo is one of the food trust boys, and the section looked very much like a cross-section of the food monopoly.

Although this panel was supposed to consider distribution "with reference to consumer problems," its report stated that "the interests of the public will be served best if the actual marketing functions are performed by private business, operating under fair rules, but free to compete both on the basis of services and on the basis of charges." And so far as government aid was concerned, there was nothing more definite than a statement that the food stamp plan, and other forms of help "be extended as rapidly as possible to all needy families in the United States."

MISSING at this section were representatives of farm organizations who could point to the Bureau of Agricultural Economics' estimate that in 1940 American consumers spent about \$14,800,000,000 for foods grown in this country and that farmers got only \$6,200,000,000 out of that sum. The food trust walked off with the difference. The whole problem of the spread between what the consumer pays and what the farmer gets, never came out into the open during the conference until consumer delegates called attention to it. A statement by fifteen consumer delegates on milk prices charged that "high milk prices result from a nationwide pattern of monopolistic prices and practices, wastes in milk distribution, unnecessary trade barriers through misuse of sanitary regulations, retail price fixing, and an unbalanced farm price system imposing artificially high prices on fresh milk. Meanwhile returns to farmers from so-called surplus milk which is manufactured into dairy products are disproportionately low."

Much was said at the conference about the need for greater agricultural production of "protective foods" such as dairy products by farmers who now concentrate on wheat, cotton, and tobacco. But little thought was given to the 5,000,000 farm families who do not even have enough money to raise food for sale

to city folks, or to feed themselves. It was pointed out by many nutritionists that an amazing number of rural families have very poor diets. Although home canning was emphasized as one method of combating rural malnutrition, by far the greater need is raising farm income and extending the farm tenancy and migrant programs.

Most of the twenty-five (out of 900 delegates) consumer, labor, and Negro representatives were in the section on Economic Policy and Social Responsibility and did a very good job of turning out a section report and accompanying recommendations. In fact the report was so good that the chairman, Dr. Hazel Kyrk, Consulting Specialist to the Bureau of Home Economics, felt compelled to give the conference an elaborate apology indicating that it had been drawn up mainly by representatives of consumer and labor groups.

IN the general recommendations accepted by the conference as a whole, consumer and labor insistence won inclusion of proposals for "vigorous prosecution of illegal practices under the anti-trust laws and the laws relating to unfair trade practices," and for improvement of "food distribution, including processing, marketing, packaging, and labeling, to bring about greater real economies for the consumer." Even the mention of the need for an attack on unemployment and extension of government aid, however vague, can be traced to the effectiveness of these delegates.

Consumer groups emphasized low-cost milk distribution as one of the greatest needs and urged that "the government assume the responsibility of making available one quart of milk a day to every child and a pint of milk for every adult." They proposed a consumer agency in the government, a positive program of price control, and eliminating the tax burden on low-income groups. They asked for elimination of barriers against employment of Negroes in "defense" industries. Under consumer and labor pressure the section on Economic Policy opposed reduction in Federal non-defense expenditures for employment and relief as well as state price-fixing laws and sales excise taxes on food. The section favored increased production of consumer goods through government subsidy if necessary, extension of collective bargaining to all workers, and broadening of the Wage and Hour and Social Security Acts to raise the income levels of undernourished Americans.

But the administration-sponsored and controlled conference as a whole went the other way. It adjourned, pledging "full support to the President" in his newly-created full national emergency, with the understanding that delegates were to go back home to toughen up the people for the "sacrifices" ahead. The small group of consumer and labor delegates did, however, put forward a program which would really help to eliminate malnutrition. They went home ready to use the information made available at the conference to defend the interests of the country's workers.

EVA LAPIN.

MR. LASKI BENDS THE KNEE

The intellectual leader of the British Labor Party proposes a spurious "new world order." The old, notorious arguments again. A. B. Magil's concluding article.

ONE of the favorite devices of those who seek to enlist support for this war is to divert attention from the nature of the conflict itself and toward the new world order of lasting peace and social well-being which they promise will emerge from it. This in itself is an implicit admission that the present order has failed disastrously. Yet it is out of this hideous present that the brighter future is supposed to burgeon. And the men and classes that are the architects of our immediate catastrophe are to be trusted to build this better world—the world which Woodrow Wilson, in a message to Congress on Nov. 11, 1918, assured us had already been established by the first imperialist conflict. But the disillusioned peoples may not be disposed to place too much credence in the promises of Hitler, Churchill, or Roosevelt. There is required a Clarence Streit to talk Union Now and make of it almost a religious cult. There is required a host of turncoat liberals and Socialists to croon European federation, new international order—to invest with pious plausibility this meretricious fraud. And none is more artful than the chief intellectual ornament of the British Labor Party, Harold Laski. On this question, as on others, Laski is, in fact, a mirror of international Social Democracy and its liberal variants.

LASKI'S PROPOSALS for a new world order are the counterpart in the international sphere of "revolution by consent." And they are equally spurious. On the problem of a world community this man who has the effrontery to speak of "the incredible tergiversations of the British Communist Party" has exhibited the same intellectual volatility, the same capacity for frequently "changing his mind" which, as my previous article demonstrated, he has shown in regard to fascism, the nature of the state, and related questions. In the boom days of postwar capitalism Laski, like most other leading Social Democrats, put all his faith in a League of Nations which had been organized by the victor powers in order to maintain their dominance and which had become a center of anti-Soviet intrigue. In *A Grammar of Politics*, for example, a lengthy work published in 1925, Laski assumes *a priori* that the League is an impartial, neutral body set up for the purpose of preventing war and regulating other aspects of international relations; his primary concern is with suggestions for improving its technical functioning.

Even when economic collapse began to undermine the postwar treaty system on which the League had been built, Laski's fundamental approach remained unchanged except that he shifted his emphasis from the League as such to more general proposals for an ideal world order under capitalism. Conceiving na-

tionalism and internationalism as opposites, he declared that the path to this international order was through the abolition of sovereignty, as a result of which the nation-state would become "a mere province in that wider community." ("Nationalism and the Future of Civilization," published in 1932 and included in *The Danger of Being a Gentleman and Other Essays*.) Not the elimination of capitalism, but of national sovereignty—this was the focal idea in Laski's thinking throughout this period. He completely disregarded the concrete experience of the capitalist world which demonstrated that national antagonisms, far from diminishing, were greatly accentuated in the imperialist era. Just as completely did he disregard the experience of the socialist world—the Soviet Union—where the eradication of capitalism made possible the creation of a multi-national federation expressing at the same time the national values and aspirations of the peoples that comprised it.

Less than a year later Laski was arguing against the point of view expressed in "Nationalism and the Future of Civilization." But, as is usual with him, he directed his criticism not at Harold Laski, but at someone else, pretending that he himself had never been associated with this idea. In *Democracy in Crisis*, published in 1933, he took to task Professor Zimmern for proposing international regulatory agencies without first seeking to supplant capitalism. "The state power," he wrote, "cannot for international purposes be regarded as something distinct from the system of privilege which gives it its whole color and complexion. . . . An analysis such as Professor Zimmern makes, in fact, ignores altogether the inherent contradictions of capitalism." And Laski cited the League of Nations as proof that capitalism negates all efforts at constructing an international order. In *The State and Theory and Practice* (1935), the book in which he came closest to the Marxist position, Laski developed this new approach—lifted from the Communists—even more clearly. He wrote:

So long, therefore, as the effective purpose of the state, internally regarded, is to protect the principles of capitalism, so long, in its external aspect will it require to retain the use of war as an instrument of national policy. If sovereignty and an effective world order are incompatible ways of life, then also capitalism and a world order are incompatible; for war is rooted in the capitalist system in our experience of its functioning.

It should be noted that even when he moved toward a sound attitude, he continued to be preoccupied with the question of sovereignty, which is essentially an unreal issue. He had in mind primarily those aspects of national sovereignty that result in clashes

between states. But these are true of sovereignty *under capitalism*. Eliminate the present system and with it the competitive struggle for trade that leads to wars, and even if the world consists of sovereign socialist states, there would be no conflict among them.

Laski continued to maintain that no European or world federation was possible under the existing social relations until the coming of that event which most fully confirmed this thesis: the outbreak of the second imperialist war. He then proceeded to turn his opinions inside out as casually as one changes one's clothes. In an article in the *Nation* of Jan. 14, 1939, he had written: "The failure of the League of Nations is built upon the fact that it demands from its members the surrender of the policy to which the whole inherent logic of their economic system impels them." Less than nine months later (in the Oct. 4, 1939, issue of the *New Republic*) he was blueprinting a new League of Nations built on essentially the same principles. In fact, there is nothing in his proposals that conflicts in any essentials with the five principles for a "new international order" recently outlined by Secretary of State Hull. It is true that Laski makes his bow before alleged socialism when he declares: "They [the European states] must agree to arrange for the rapid transfer to national ownership of the vital instruments of production, with reasonable compensation to existing owners." But this state-capitalist (and non-socialist) proposal is one which many New Dealers would endorse. And who is to compel the capitalist states to do that which in the past they have refused to do? Once again we have "revolution by consent" and under the leadership of the forces of counter-revolution. And again reliance on the "good-will" of the capitalists is merely the cloak for abject surrender to them.

Laski's full-blooded imperialism becomes evident in his plan for the colonies. The colonies are to be no more free in his European union than in Hitler's "new order." All he suggests is that their ownership be internationalized. As a sop he adds that they be developed "as rapidly as possible to the point where they may become self-governing [a rabbit phrase] democracies within the union." A literal-minded British Tory might argue a bit on internationalization—though this could easily be a variant of the League of Nations mandate system. But is there a Tory who will not insist that Britain for years has been working toward the ideal of "self-government" for India? The problem of India and the other colonies has been a source of embarrassment to the liberal apologists for the war. They prefer to ignore the fact that the Churchill who displays such ardor for bringing freedom to Europe denies any semblance

of it to more than four-fifths of the British empire. They do not wish to be reminded that the 400,000,000 subjects of King George VI whose skins happen to be darker than Harold Laski's may feel no more enthusiasm for the civilization that keeps them enslaved than do the inhabitants of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia for the Nazi version of this civilization.

IN the disposition to condone or ignore British colonial rule there is implicit a racism which would fill with dismay many of those who have been seduced by the liberal defenders of Churchill's and Roosevelt's war. After all, what the Nazis have done is merely to make explicit what is implicit in all imperialism. Laski himself has been so thoroughly saturated with imperialist prejudices that back in 1925, in *A Grammar of Politics*, he openly justified "the ideal of a 'white Australia'" and the race segregation of Japanese immigrants. Coming from one who is himself a member of a group, the Jewish people, that have been the victims of discrimination, this is all the more shocking. Today, though no longer so crude, there is no change in Laski's fundamental attitude toward "inferior" races who are not yet as "civilized" as the London bankers and industrialists and therefore not fit for "self-government." In *Where Do We Go from Here?* he writes quite sharply concerning the character of British rule in India and boldly proposes not independence, but "self-government"—one year after the war. It is clear that his concern is not for the 350,000,000 serfs of British imperialism in India, but for the embarrassment that the British war effort suffers from the relentless exposure of its true objectives. And in an article in the April *Harper's* he even attributes the treatment of India to "the absence of a strong public opinion on the matter"—that is, he blames the English people rather than the rulers of empire. Laski's entire argument in *Where Do We Go from Here?* is based on "the gains that would be available to us"—that is, the British imperialists—"from a free India, bound to us, like the Dominions, by no ties other than its own choice." Needless to say, dominion status, even were it granted, would not be synonymous with true independence; and the dragging of Canada, Australia, and South Africa into a war thousands of miles away from their own soil shows how much "free choice" the dominions have.

In Laski's approach to these problems there is not a grain of socialism or of democracy. If taken at face value, it is at best an effort to make minor adjustments in order to maintain and fortify the premises of imperialism. The fact is that though Laski, in the aforementioned article in the *Nation* of Jan. 14, 1939, expressed belief in "the broad truth of the Marxian philosophy" and declared that postwar experience has been a "vindication of the analysis that Marx made of social phenomena nearly a century ago," his own attitude toward history has been completely non-Marxist. The ideas he expounds in his

books on the problems of government and the sources he quotes approvingly lead to the conclusion that his thinking has been influenced most not by Marx or Engels (let alone Lenin), but by the ideologists of the golden age of bourgeois liberalism, by men like Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, de Tocqueville, Walter Bagehot, and H. T. Green.

Even more clearly is Laski's non-Marxist approach revealed in his own historical method. For example, in two essays on the intellectual background of the French Revolution, included in his book, *Studies in Law and Politics* (1932), there is practically no effort to relate ideas to the social conditions out of which they emerged. The author seeks to explain those ideas primarily in terms of their own characteristics. This explains nothing at all, whatever virtues it may have as exposition. The same is true of an essay on the late Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes in the book. In Laski's two most important studies of governmental structure in England and the United States, *Parliamentary Government in England* (1938) and *The American Presidency* (1940), the same non-Marxist, in essence non-historical, method is applied to political institutions. In both books he was chiefly concerned with the mechanism of government and with proposals for improving its functioning. In *The American Presidency*, incredible as it may seem, there is no indication, except for a few vague sentences in the final chapter, that the Presidency operates in the context of capitalist property relations and has been conditioned by them. In this book, largely written before the outbreak of the present war, the imperialist policies of Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson are praised and Laski makes his obeisance to capitalism by declaring that the American party system "achieves the results that the needs of the people require."

Let me here note an interesting psychological phenomenon in Laski's thinking and writing: his inability to make any criticism of capitalist institutions and policies without finding something to say in extenuation. Does Laski tell us that the capitalists, in order to preserve their privileges, will not hesitate to destroy the liberties of the majority of the people? he at once hastens to add that of course they are entirely sincere and believe themselves to be acting for the national welfare. Does he criticize the reactionary, pre-Roosevelt Supreme Court? he immediately assures us that "This is not for one moment to argue that the Supreme Court sets out deliberately to weight the incidence of the Constitution. On the contrary, no one can read its decisions without the conviction that their authors have acted wholly in good faith." (*Democracy in Crisis.*) Does he point out that in any serious social crisis the influence of the British monarchy will be used on the side of profit and despotism? he must follow with page after obsequious page to the effect that "Nothing in this hypothetical argument assumes any desire on the part of the Crown to act in a partisan way." (*Democracy in*

Crisis.) There is, in fact, nothing so bad in capitalist society that Laski cannot find in it some good; he is always his worst enemies' best friend. My objection to all this is not that it isn't possible for capitalists or Supreme Court judges or the King of England to be sincerely reactionary, but that this is wholly immaterial, while the effect of repeatedly making this point is to blunt the struggle against fundamental evils. These genuflexions, it seems to me, are class-conditioned; they express a desire, whether conscious or not, to conciliate capitalism. It is significant that Laski, even in his most "militant" period, seems unable to express any strong class passion in behalf of the workers; one misses the *hatred* for capitalism and all its works that one finds in the writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and their followers in various lands. Recently, however, Laski has abandoned this mood of tolerant reasonableness, the habit of seeing both sides of every question. In articles such as "British Communists Help Hitler" in the *Nation* of Feb. 15, 1941, and "British Democracy and Mr. Kennedy" in the April *Harper's* he has managed to summon the kind of undiluted emotion against the Communists which he was never able to express against the capitalists. This too is class-conditioned.

It may be asked: what is the source of Laski's inability to employ the Marxist analysis to which he himself once paid tribute? What lies behind his ideological gyrations and his readiness to adapt himself to the *status quo*? In the article in the *Nation* of Jan. 14, 1939 in which he professed himself a Marxist, Laski failed to mention that a dozen years earlier, he had published a book, *Communism*, in which he pointed out the "errors" of Marx and specifically rejected the theory of surplus value, parroting the familiar bourgeois "refutations" which have themselves been refuted by history. The theory of surplus value—"the most epoch-making achievement of Marx's work," Engels called it—is the cornerstone of Marxism. It is my belief that the theoretical root of Laski's reformism, of his incurable antipathy to the Marxist outlook, of his vacillations, his opportunism, his ultimate betrayal lies in his rejection of the theory of surplus value.

This theory is, in brief, as follows: the value of any commodity (not to be confused with its price which may or may not coincide with its value) is determined by the amount of *socially necessary* labor required to produce it, and this labor is measured by its duration. For a commodity to be transformed into another of greater value, there must be brought into action a unique kind of commodity, human labor-power. This is paid for at its value (that is, the amount needed throughout the whole of society to enable workers to live, work and reproduce their kind). Let us assume that the value of a worker's labor-power is represented by four hours of labor. In four hours, therefore, he creates enough value to repay his wages. But he has contracted to work for eight hours.

He therefore creates in the remaining four hours additional value, equal to his wages, for which he is not paid. That additional value, known as surplus value, is appropriated by the owner of the means of production. It is divided among the capitalist class in the form of profit, interest, and ground-rent. In actual operation modern capitalist society is, of course, much more complex than here indicated, but capitalist production under all circumstances and under all forms of government is the production of surplus value. Out of this basic mechanism arise all other phenomena: economic crises, monopoly, unemployment, war, etc. The theory of surplus value is thus the core of the Marxist critique of capitalism. It is the core of the moral indictment that capitalism literally robs the worker at the point of production.

BY rejecting this theory Laski obscures the Marxist emphasis on the necessity of fundamentally changing the system of production. He places his emphasis on distribution, on effect rather than cause. He has repeatedly written that capitalism has solved the problem of production, but distributes badly. Marxists, on the contrary, maintain, first, that capitalism is unable to solve the problem of production because its property relations prevent the expansion of the productive forces to meet the needs of society; secondly, that the manner of distribution is itself determined by the mode of production. ("The distribution of the means of consumption at any period is merely the consequence of the distribution of the conditions of production themselves. But this secondary distribution is a characteristic of the methods of production themselves. . . . Vulgar Socialism [and with it a section of the Democrats] has taken over from bourgeois economics the method of treating and considering distribution as independent of the methods of production and thereby representing Socialism as turning principally on distribution." Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program*.)

Laski's misunderstanding of this question also appears in the form of a persistent emphasis on equality as the condition of Socialism. His most frequent characterization of capitalism is that it is an "unequal society." In *The State in Theory and Practice* he even attributed the accumulation and export of capital to this inequality rather than to the productive system. Laski's approach to the problem of equality is likewise derived not from Marxist Socialism, but from the traditions of the bourgeois revolution. In *Economics and Politics in the Period of the Proletarian Dictatorship* Lenin declared: "Long ago Engels explained in *Anti-Duehring* that the conception of equality, as the expression of the relations of a trading system of production, becomes a prejudice unless equality is understood in the sense of the *abolition of classes*. This simple truth concerning the bourgeois-democratic and the socialist conception of equality is constantly forgotten." It might be added that if equality were the condition

rather than the result (in an approximate sense) of socialism, then Jefferson would have been a Socialist, for he, too, projected an equal society, consisting of small producers.

What are the political consequences of Laski's position? If unequal distribution is the root of the evil, then obviously all emphasis should be placed on securing for the workers a larger share of the wealth produced not in order to prepare them for the task of abolishing capitalism, but in order to place them on an equal plane with the capitalists. There are revealing phrases to this effect in Laski's work. In *Liberty in the Modern State* (1930) he wrote [all emphases mine—A. B. M.] that "every step we take towards freedom is a step towards the equalization of privileges now held unequally." In "A Plea for Equality," included in the volume, *The Dangers of Obedience* (1930) he maintained that "because the rights of property are *unequally distributed*, all other rights are modeled in their image." And in his latest book, *Where Do We Go from Here?* he urged that "the partnership between privilege and the masses" be "of a permanent character." Thus, by leaving untouched the ownership of the means of production, this approach becomes the theoretical foundation for the "gradualist" socialism of the British Labor Party leadership and of international Social-Democracy—the premise of Social-Democratic surrender to capitalism.

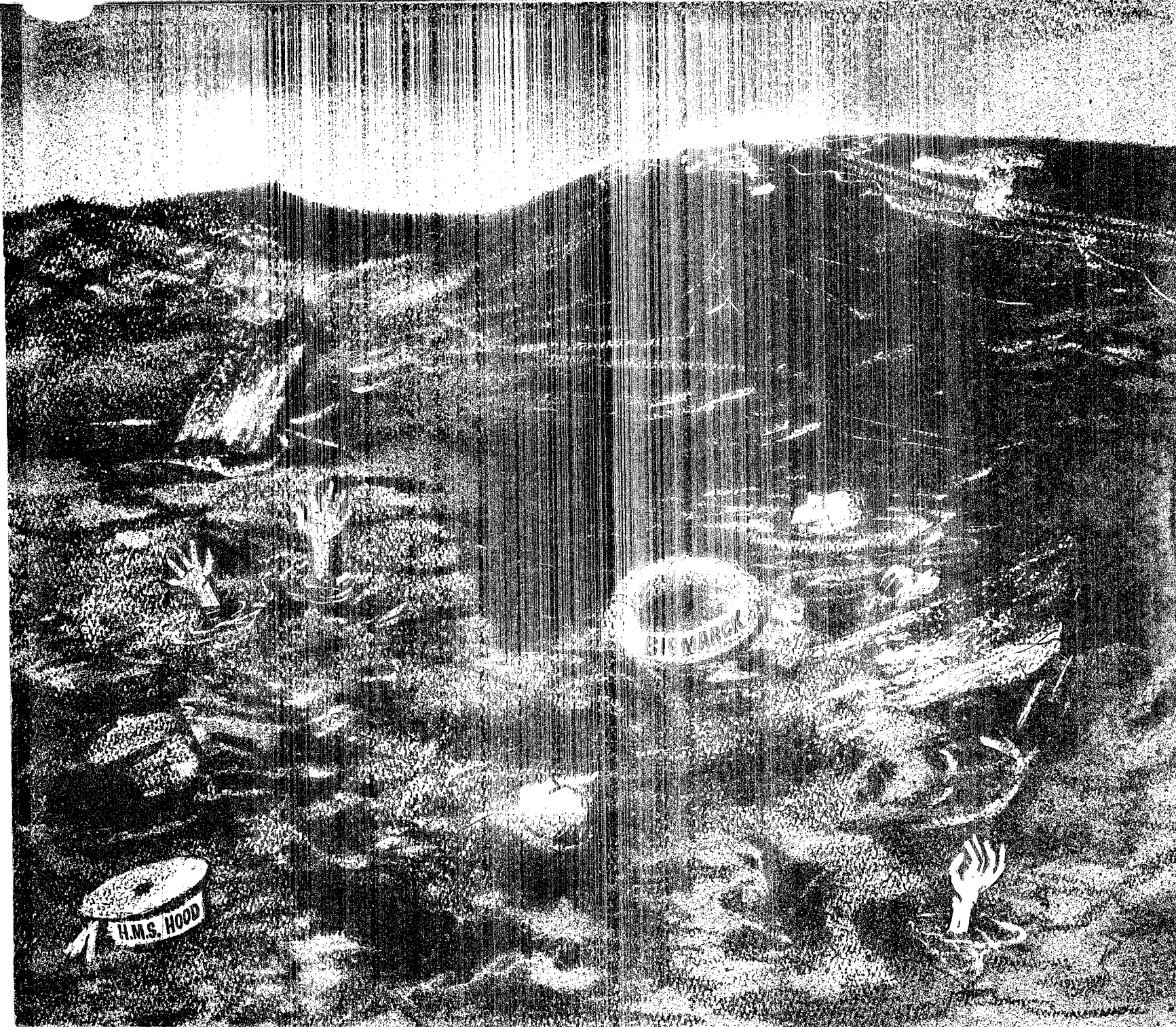
IN every political attitude there is a dynamic which sooner or later asserts itself. One cannot for long accept the postulates of reactionary war without abandoning not merely socialism, but even that middle class liberalism whose first article of faith has been the preservation of civil liberties. Laski has now assumed the role of devil's advocate *par excellence*, and his principal task is to put the best face on the worst deeds. Perhaps it was only a wry coincidence that only two days after he published a letter in the *New York Times* citing as evidence of the flourishing state of British democracy that "Communists still . . . publish their journals," that Herbert Morrison, Minister of Home Security, summarily suppressed the *London Daily Worker* and the progressive news letter, *The Week*. (There has been no interference with the anti-Semitic papers published by the Polish fascists who have found asylum on English soil.) In his *Harper's* article Laski glosses over these repressive acts and tries to create the impression that freedom of the press is still unimpaired. He also defends the dismissal of workers for their political opinions. Since in a little pamphlet, *Is This an Imperialist War?* Laski obliquely justified the outlawing of the French Communist Party, and since in the *Nation* of Feb. 15, 1941, he described the democratic peace movement represented by the People's Convention as "this latest alias of the Communist Party," it is evident that Churchill can count on him in any contingency.

There would be no point in discussing Harold Laski at such length were it not for the fact that, far from being unique, his is the

typical behavior of the leadership of the British Labor Party and Social Democracy throughout the world. Social Democracy is the mechanism by which capitalism controls the working class. When in Germany that mechanism proved inadequate because of the growth of Communism and the acuteness of the capitalist crisis, it was replaced by fascism. In France important sections of Social Democracy (including such Socialist leaders as Faure and Spinasse) have been directly incorporated in Marshal Petain's totalitarian state. In Britain likewise Socialist and trade union chiefs have become the proconsuls of a government which is moving toward the fascist model. It is characteristic of this false socialism that in periods of developing social crisis some of its leading spirits, responding to the popular mood, will move to the left; this has the effect of funneling discontent and checking a complete break with capitalism on the part of the masses. The "leftism" of Laski and other leading Social Democrats in the period from about 1932 till the inception of the war was thus nothing more than a political sun tan. It is also characteristic of this false socialism that when the crisis of capitalism becomes especially severe, threatening the foundations of the system—the first and second world wars, for example—"left" leaps into the arms of right and both into the embrace of militant capitalist reaction. The history of Social Democracy is replete with such betrayals. And Harold Laski is no exception.

Laski is typical not only of Social Democracy, but of the middle class liberalism represented in this country by magazines like the *Nation* and *New Republic*. It is interesting that Laski's associations in the United States, where he has spent considerable time, have been not with Socialists, but with liberals. His closest intellectual friendships have been with men like Max Lerner and Justices Holmes, Brandeis and Frankfurter, to some of whom he has dedicated books. In other words, in a country such as England, where there is a strong Social Democratic party, Laski is a Socialist. In a country like the United States, where no substantial Social Democratic party exists, Laski is a liberal. This merely underscores that his Socialism and liberalism are essentially the same, that he has expressed the vacillations and shabby compromises of those middle class groups that are unable to escape from social, political, and ideological dependence on a dominant class which today can bring only hunger and agony and violence to the majority of mankind.

"We are passing away in Britain from the epoch of finance-capitalism," wrote Laski in the April *Harper's*. Only twelve years earlier Dittmann, one of the leaders of the German Social Democratic Party, declared at its Magdeburg congress: "We are no longer living under capitalism; we are living in the transition period to socialism, economically, politically, socially." In each period Social Democracy finds in every advance of finance-capital—of monopoly—new evidence of socialism. We know the kind of "socialism" that



Freedom of the Seas

Michaels

eventually triumphed in Germany. Today it is of the greatest importance to know the manner in which the epoch of finance-capital is "passing away" in Britain and the United States. No one need argue whether monopoly in the United States is on the way out; the three-year investigation of the Temporary National Economic Committee has proved its continued enormous growth and provided much corroborating data for the Marxist analysis. As for Britain, a recent issue of the *London Financial News* stated editorially:

The last war changed the predominantly competitive industrial structure in Britain to one in which the cartels and monopolies were of great importance. In the period between the two wars (and especially after 1932) the influence of these cartels and monopolies extended fast . . . and now the development of monopoly is pressing ahead so fast

that by the end of the war it looks as though the structure is going to be predominantly monopolist. (Quoted in London dispatch to *Sunday Worker*, March 23, 1941.)

This trend is further confirmed in an editorial in the *New York Times* of March 16, 1941, which declared that the British government's decision to concentrate civilian goods production in the "more efficient" plants "carries forward the cartelization of industry that was under way before the war."

Monopoly, finance-capital, is the seed and soil of fascism, as even Franklin D. Roosevelt recognized when he sent his message to Congress three years ago urging an investigation of monopoly. Big business in Britain and the United States is answering Harold Laski's question: where do we go from here? in a fashion no different from the German mo-

nopolists who raised Hitler's "socialism" to power.

But there is a different answer to Laski's question. It is being given by those who are determined to defend the people of Britain and the United States against fascism whether it threatens from without or within. It is being given by those who because they passionately hate Hitlerism, even when it is wrapped in the Stars and Stripes or the Union Jack, hate this war and all it implies. This growing number in our two countries, together with millions more under the Nazi heel and in the colonial world, are breaking the ground of that future (over one-sixth of the earth it is already the present) in which fascism and imperialism will be nothing but names by which civilized men will recall an age of barbarism.

A. B. MAGIL.

POET OF THE POOR

Alexander Bergman went on fighting for socialism as long as he could breathe. The death of a gifted proletarian writer. His faith in the people.

THEY said in the NEW MASSES office: You know Alec Bergman's poetry, don't you? He's in the last stages of T.B. up at Montefiore Hospital. Won't you go up and see him?

It was about two weeks later that I finally got around to it. I had meant to go sooner, but when you're healthy you feel you have plenty of time; only the dying haven't. So there I was, walking down corridors filled with the indescribable and terrible hospital smell, sick flesh and antiseptics. When I entered Bergman's room there were two boys lying in parallel beds, the nearer boy visibly dying.

"Alexander Bergman?" I asked. The boy in the further bed, who looked a little better than the other, raised his head. I went over and sat down next to him, introducing myself. He was glad to see me and wanted news, all sorts of news: what meetings were being held, what we were doing against war. With his thin face and enormous, unbelievable green eyes he looked almost like a child, but then I noticed how much gray there was in his hair. I found out later he was twenty-eight.

That was the first of many visits. I used to slip in from the porch, outside of visiting hours, and stay till the nurse came with supper. There was no question of overtaking Alec's strength, for nothing could make any difference to his strength any more. They had expected him to die in six months, when he first entered Montefiore, and he had now been there almost five years. His roommates died or were transferred or sometimes even cured, but Alec, except for a disastrous six weeks in another hospital, lay in that bed and looked out at a small corner of the sky year after year.

Who shut the door? [he wrote.]
Not me, not me
not this bird
beating from wall to wall. . . .

That was how he felt about being closed in there. But he never talked about it to me; he talked about almost everything else. He remembered the active days of his youth a good deal. I got to know various things about him; little things, like family gossip and the trouble he had keeping his contraband portable radio hidden from the hospital authorities, and how he used to lie awake at night looking at the distant lights of houses where healthy people were living. And big things, too, like the fight he put up to help the hospital staff form a union; how he wrote and edited a shop paper, had it smuggled out to be mimeographed, had it smuggled back in to be distributed; how the previous hospital administration (the present one was quite different) had threatened three times to discharge him from the

hospital, and would have, only he was too weak to be moved. I heard about the girl who left him when he got sick, and went back to Georgia, about the company doctor who gave him pills for his cough and sent him back to work. I told him things, too, about affairs like the NEW MASSES anniversary meeting.

"I wish I could get out to some of those things," he said.

The biggest thing I learned, though, was what kind of person he was and what kind of poet he was. He went on fighting for socialism as long as he could breathe; he went on breathing longer than his lungs warranted because he still had something to say. There isn't much great poetry being written today, and one's almost afraid to use the word. The "big" names in poetry are those of cheap entertainers, the Millays and MacLeishes, invited to the rich man's house to perform side by side with the torch singer. But Alec was a poet of exceptional qualities.

The quality of his work cannot be revealed by a formal analysis. He wrote an extraordinarily direct and flexible kind of free verse; he approached social problems with a passion of bitterness and a passion of tenderness. He illuminated the tragedies of the T.B. ward in a few seemingly casual lines. He spoke through the mouth of an old baker whose lungs were caked with flour dust, and capitalist society stood revealed for the murderous thing it is. All this is true, but it is not enough to say about his poetry. The important thing is that he loved people.

That love came out in everything he did or everything he wrote. Whether he was painfully collecting a few dollars for NEW MASSES, or writing an elegy for a boyhood friend, Eugene Loveman, dead in Spain, love was in it. With this love of people, too, there went a fiery and unshaken confidence in the strength of people. Men sitting in comfortable chairs might give way to cynicism, but Alec, breathing desperately with the rags that were left of his lungs, saw the new life of socialism shining outside his bedroom window. He knew the people would see it, too. "They'll win," he said.

His own contribution to the struggle was incredible for a man on the edge of death. He never stopped writing; reviews, poems, the manuscript of a novel. . . . When he could no longer type he got a fountain pen and went on. The last time I saw him, three days before he died, I was able to tell him

that his poetry was to be published in book form; several friends of his, unknown to him, had contributed some of the money needed for publication. He was dying then, and drugged with an enormous dose of morphine, but he rallied enough to make plans for the book. On Friday night he propped himself up and wrote in a notebook for hours: messages for his friends, instructions for distributing his clothes, books, manuscripts, and the few dollars he had. The hospital, understaffed like all our hospitals, left him alone all night; when the orderly came in at seven in the morning, he was dead.

It is impossible to say whether his death was inevitable from the moment he entered Montefiore. Certainly he managed to hold out for five years under adverse circumstances and in an unsuitable climate. Perhaps he might have been saved five years ago. What is sure is that he could have been saved before that by decent doctors, proper working conditions, and above all by a social system in which tuberculosis is not an occupational disease of the working class. He was a worker and he died because he was a worker, as surely as if he had been clubbed by company police or smothered in a mine. He never forgot that himself, and no one who knew him will forget it.

Another thing about Alec Bergman was that he didn't ask anything for himself, except to be remembered, except to have his name thought of sometimes among the names of other fighters. He probably never realized how deeply he impressed people, so that one girl who had only known him for six weeks traveled miles to bring money toward his book, and one man who only saw him for ten minutes just before he died felt the death as the loss of an old friend, and one worker in the hospital kept him alive, those last months, by buying and cooking special food for him.

"I have started a new poem," he wrote in his last letter to me. "I hope I can finish it—it starts":

Will some voice say—He was not there;
When men talk of remembered things
And you are silent. . . .

Ask yourself now,
will the future be silent and ashamed
will your eyes bear scars inside
where memory stores its outworn films. . . ."

It was only the sketch of a poem, but he went on to describe what he wanted to say. The poem was to be against the summer soldiers, those who expect to share in the new world but will do nothing to help bring it about. "You finish it for me," he said when I saw him on Wednesday. We will finish it.

JOY DAVIDMAN.



Rodney

Some Poems by Alexander Bergman

Jericho

We cannot be kept within the walls,
The false barriers will break at the shout
of our anger freed from its long silence.

The builders of high bridges and sweet spires,
the quiet people decent in their homes
and all who sing for liberty
will meet the embrace of our shrunken arms.

Out of our beds and our uniform cells
out of the smelling, serried, crowded wards
into the clean streets of little towns,
the green fields that never saw our faces—
we shall go—past the homes of the straight
firm walkers into the cities that banished us.
There are those who will fear our poison
our twisted, sometimes bitter faces,
our eyes of lizards strangers to the sun.

There are some who will tremble
when we walk with the hungry hordes,
the marchers with tired feet,
the fighters for peace, for freedom,
the sowers of wheat.

We Shall Love

To Jayne Percy

Can we sing these days
purely of love and nothing else?
No hard word dropped in the simple song
like a stone in a quiet pool?

When the names of oppressors are gone
when their ways are forgotten,
and there is no shadow
that goes with a man through life,

we shall sing, using the same old words
with a sure joy in the sound,
there will be love with the singing,
the shadows be made by the sun
or the natural night.

We shall sleep unafraid in the world
and gladly arise in the morning.

This, my own girl, wife of the digger,
girl of the sailor home from the sea,
will be life in a world made over
by such as we.

Harvest

To Everett Cameron

This is my house, my barn;
these few good acres
are my native soil.
Mine was the strength and blood
that ran rich courses
through the vacant mud.

My father's eager bones
have limed this soil;
they sweeten the harsh crops
that I harvest here,
the strong, proud, unrewarded toil,
the sleeping, yellow, empty days of fall.

Out of these furrowed loins each year
I reap good sights of corn,
sharp smell of apples sparkling in the air;
but find the autumn's golden horn
did not brim over to the page
where interest multiplies like weeds.

Defiance

I have lived long enough to see
betrayal and the traitors shot.
I have seen murder and the killers hanged
I have seen rulers scurrying away
like vermin from the coming light
And nations gripped in lockjaw terror, speak.
I have seen freedom too well prisoned
in the hearts of nameless men
I have seen—
Despite the dungeon of my crippled shell,
Despite the walls that hem me in,
Despite deliberate darkness
spread upon the land—awakening!
Therefore I have hope
Sure of fulfillment
I have no need of death,
Nor longing nor desire for it.
I seek no refuge there
Nor should you whose days
Lie endlessly and joyfully ahead.
Though death is offered cloaked in honor
Though death comes bugled, brilliant, blest,
Reject it
Defeat it
Tear off its uniforms and saintly garments
Let it stand naked, ugly, shivering
Before all humanity,
Without honor anywhere.

Time for One More Song

There is just time for one more song
before the lights go out,
so what shall it be, boys?

Good Night, Ladies?
Say, we hate to leave you now,
but we must

and there is time
for one more song, only one.
A song to the ladies is nice
but where will it leave us
after the lights go out?

Listen:
each year in honor of spring
the returning robins sing,
and their song is a golden wire
twisted through the days of your life,
weaving the early springs together
for death to shatter.

Boys, does anyone know such a song,
a song that will conquer the rhythm
of murderous drums in the sky,
of nails and leather on stone?
Can anyone sing it?
Quick;
there is only just time.

IT'S A NATURAL

The amazing success story of Local 65, Wholesale and Warehouse Union. Little pins on a map and simple organizing principles. The good neighbor policy in practice.

ARTHUR OSMAN is the father of an eight-year-old son named David, and the president of a phenomenon called Local 65, Wholesale and Warehouse Union, CIO, of precisely the same age. The twinship of these two youngsters was not entirely accidental, but was calculated as craftily as Arthur Osman's boss used to calculate on maintaining a ninety-hour work week and seven-dollar pay envelopes.

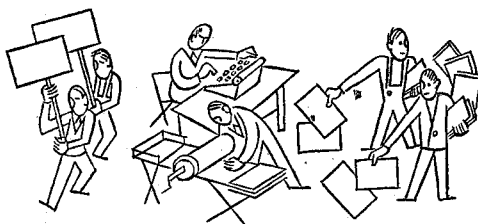
This twin birth occurred in the summer of 1933. The workers in a dirty little warehouse in Orchard Street, New York, wanted a place to meet out of earshot of stoolpigeons. It wasn't too easy in those days. An inspired warehouse worker said, "Let's go to Arthur Osman's house. We can celebrate the arrival of the new baby." Local 65 cut its eye teeth a month later when a committee of the same youths who welcomed David Osman served notice on their boss that they wanted a union contract, wage increases to boost their pay five dollars a week, and a sixty-hour week. Did they win it? You bet they did, and the biggest part of the victory was that sixty-hour week: thirty hours lopped off the former schedule; a ten-hour day in place of a fifteen-hour day six days a week!

In the hinterland there may be some remote hamlet where news of this now fabulous local union has not penetrated. We doubt it. Fun and fight are the two words closest to the hearts of Local 65 members. A list of its activities reads like the offering of a fashionable summer camp. Yet last July when the New York City police forbade mass picketing by 200 Local 65 members at Golding Brothers' warehouse, the union showed up next day with 4,000 pickets. The police hereabouts have not seemed inclined to start an argument about mass picketing ever since.

However, the aim here is not so much to tell what Local 65 has done—that story is too well known already—but to tell how it did it. Clear-sighted leadership stemming directly from a militant rank and file is the explanation in its simplest terms.

A slogan can be a dynamo or it can be window dressing. In Local 65 the slogans are dynamic. They plot the course of achievement. Up on the third floor of Bible House, the somber headquarters of this anything-but-somber organization, there is a bustling and business-like office. Across the farthest wall is a banner. It reads: "*Be a Good Neighbor—Organize the Shop Next Door.*"

Simple, isn't it? But that's just how they do it. They organize the shop next door. The application of this slogan brought 10,000 members into Local 65 up through May of this year; its leaders are just as confident of bringing 7,000 more in the next seven months as they launch a new membership drive to



take up where the last one left off. Seven thousand members in seven months; that's the meaning of that sea of green and white banners in New York's May Day parade which bore the cryptic legend, "7 in 7, It's a Natural."

"Organize the Shop Next Door" was the principle which gave Local 65 its start in life. The youthful veterans of the first meeting at Arthur Osman's house recognized that they would never be able to preserve any gains made in a contract with their Orchard Street boss unless they brought more workers in neighboring warehouses into the union. However, in those early days this principle—sound and simple as it seems now—ran into opposition which slowed down the union's growth.

The union, first independent, joined the AFL as a federal local. In the chaotic warehouse and wholesale industry, made up mainly of small establishments dealing in widely varied businesses, the AFL leaders insisted upon union divisions based on craft. Drygoods warehouses constituted one group, grocery warehouses another; notions still another, and so on. Under this system four organizing drives floundered. The drive launched in 1933-34 netted 110 new members; the 1934-35 drive brought only 350 into the union, and the 1935-36 drive added a scant 300. The following year the gain was 450, but in 1938 things began to change rapidly. The union was in the CIO now. The first twelve months saw the net gain in membership spurt from 450 to 2,532. During the next two years 3,949 warehouse workers signed up and in the fourth year the local launched its phenomenal "Security Drive," which has already brought the union more than 4,750 new members. This goal will be the starting point for the "7 in 7" campaign.

IN THE organizer's room at Local 65 headquarters you see the "Good Neighbor" slogan at work. The general appearance of the room suggests the GHQ of an army at the front. Across its length and breadth maps and charts cover the walls. Each of the maps covers a division or a subdivision of the union's activity in the area of the Port of New York, the metropolitan area and the New Jersey Hudson River shore.

These maps vary in size according to the concentration of warehouses and the intensity of Local 65 activity. One covers an area of

only six square blocks. Two more cover the entire borough of the Bronx. All the maps are studded with brightly colored pins. In the smallest section, for instance, the six-block area between Thirty-sixth and Thirty-eighth Streets and between Broadway and Seventh Avenue, there are more than 100 bright green pins of different sizes, about twenty red pins and three or four yellow ones. Solly Molofsky, youthful assistant recreation director of Local 65, explained that the green pins indicated fully-organized warehouses operating under closed shop contracts with the union; that red ones indicate "shops we are working on" and that yellow pins represent shops which have been reported by neighboring organized shops and where organizing soon will begin. "What we do," said Mr. Molofsky, "is to turn the red buttons green and the yellow buttons red."

THUS the changing composition of the colored pins on the score or more of maps in the organizers' room is the practical measure of the success of the Good Neighbor plan. But there is another slogan which carries the idea just a step farther in actually working out the process. The companion slogan is, "Every Member an Organizer; Every Steward a Business Agent." It is this auxiliary slogan that carries the main slogan fully into effect in the field of the union's operations.

The principle involved in this slogan is also simple. In practical effect it means this: If the Jones & Co. warehouse is organized and Smith & Co. across the street is not, then all the workers in the Jones shop, led by their shop steward constitute a "crew" to organize Smith's workers. Plans for the miniature organizing drive are made directly by the Jones & Co. crew to fit the peculiar conditions of that particular neighborhood. Lunch-hour contacts broaden into friendship between the workers of Jones and Smith. Back in the organizer's room at union headquarters the yellow pin that once spotted the location of the non-union Smith shop is now a red one. By now Smith workers are visiting the union in groups, finding places in one or more of the sixteen varied recreational activities from photography to hiking, from baseball to drama. Excited huddles in the Smith shop spread news of the fun to be had in Local 65. The union's growth begins to take on the form of a stampede. This tempo sweeps on through the contract negotiation stage. If a strike is necessary, Local 65 is ready. The annual budget has already set aside a sizeable working strike fund with surplus to give ample emergency leeway. In nine cases out of ten—either with or without a strike—the red pin on the map goes down and a green one goes up. The Smith shop is now ready to assume the next job. It becomes a "good neighbor," organizes

its own crew, and sets out to repeat the process at the shop down the street.

Within the union there is no opposition to this program. But from without a chorus of so-called labor leaders whine against it. In a practical way, Local 65 meets Hillmanism in the attempt of the Hillman-dominated Textile Workers Union to raid textile warehouses where Local 65 has already organized and brought union contracts to nearly 2,000 workers. David Dubinsky's knitgoods local made a similar jurisdictional claim for the knitgoods warehouses, and Max Zaritsky, in the name of the AFL Hatters, tried to move in on the hat warehouses. Their weapon is Red-baiting and their principal target the vigorous peace program of Local 65. But, as Jack Paley, recreational director, put it, "We haven't lost a shop to them yet and we never will. Our members support the union's peace policy for the same reasons that they support its general policy: they made the policy themselves." For a practical glimpse of how this works he called in Lennie Schwartz, twenty-year-old chairman of the Youth Committee.

Lennie is a thin, wiry East Side youngster, two years out of DeWitt Clinton High School, who came into the union from an eleven dollar a week job in A. Kirsh's millinery and ribbon warehouse. Let Lennie tell "how we did it":

"It was in the fall of 1939—October, I guess it was," he said as he sat on a table in the organizers' room before a street map of the East Side section. "We organized a 'Yanks Are Not Coming Committee.' There were about six of us, all rank and filers. We got out some leaflets right at the jump and talked to other guys about the war—about how it wasn't our war—things like that." Lennie made a broad gesture.

"In February we had about thirty or forty on our committee and twenty of us went down to Washington to the American Youth Congress Youth Pilgrimage. Opposition? There just wasn't any. Two or three people spoke against us maybe, but they were the same fellows who opposed the general program of the union. Nobody paid any attention.

"When we came back we set up our Youth

Committee with youth leaders in every section. So by the time of the Emergency Peace Mobilization meeting in Chicago we were ready to send eighty delegates. These came straight from the shops and the boys in the shops paid the expenses of their own delegates. Take the Arthur Bier shop, for example, in the Port Authority Building.

"Abe Patrick, a buddy of mine, was the shop steward. They called a meeting one day at lunch hour. There are about eighty in that shop and the boys all sat around on the packing tables. Somebody said 'sure we want to send a delegate.' Somebody else said 'let's make it two.' The fellows all said 'okay, let's make it two.' And so they sent 'em. They took up money in the shop to pay the expenses and when that wasn't quite enough they got out and sold EPM buttons in the street. By that time we had got out our 'Local 65 Peace Bonds' and they sold some of them. That's the way it was done."

AFTER this we understood what President Osman meant when he said, "Local 65ers have no controversial issues. Their only controversy is with their bosses. Expanding democracy, genuine and extensive rank and file participation in the formulation of policies is responsible for our strength and growth."

All issues that others have found "controversial," Osman said, are always approached from the point of view of the vital bread and butter interests of the members. Lennie Schwartz gave us an example of how the union met two such issues, discrimination against Negroes for jobs and the fight for peace, jointly.

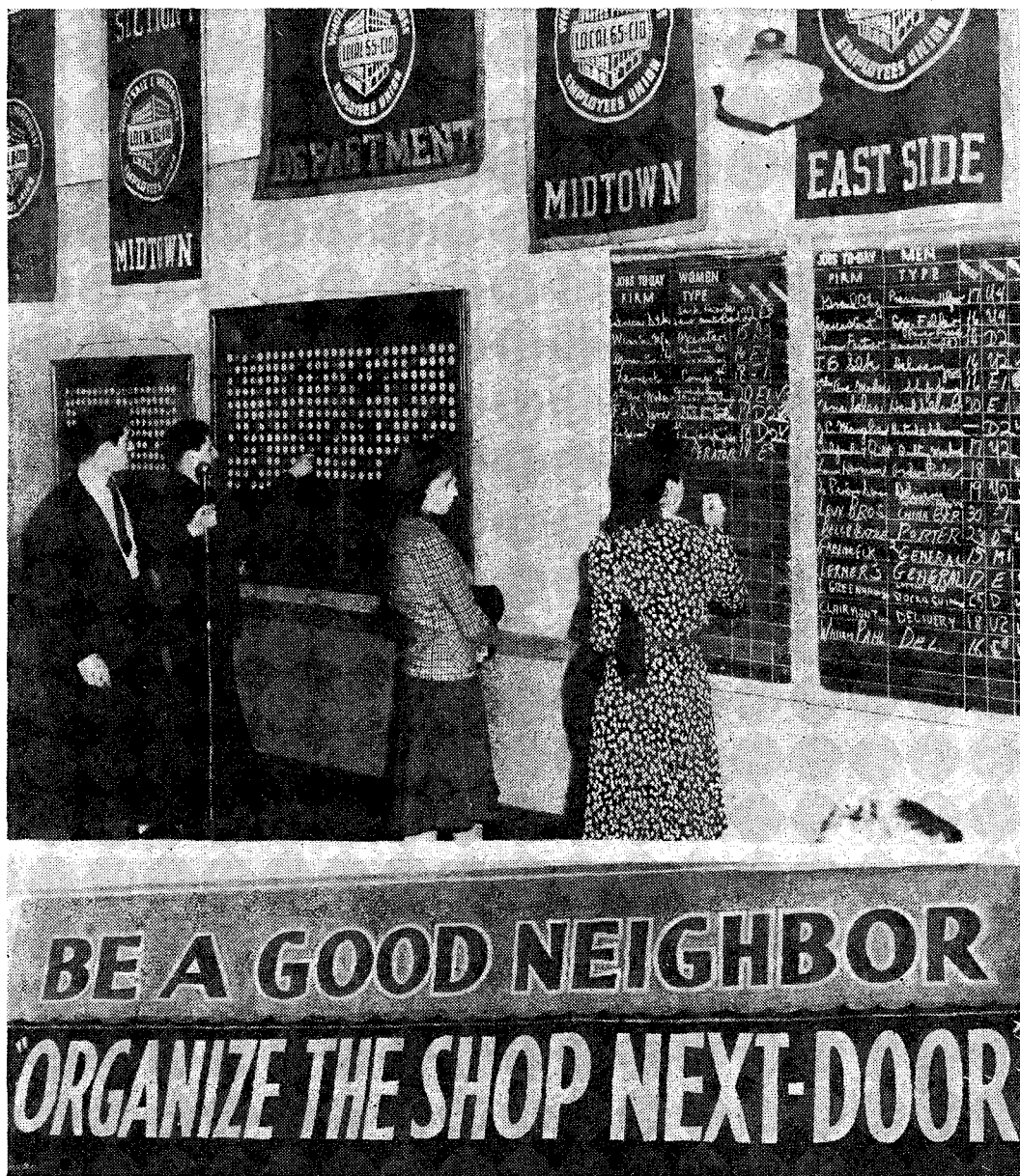
"A hundred and fifty of us were going down to Washington for the Town Meeting of Youth last February. When our bus stopped at a little crossroads cafe in Maryland the proprietor put up a squawk and wouldn't serve a Negro member of our delegation. So what did we do? We walked out on him to a man and when we got to Washington that night we talked about it in the hotel.

"Two members of that delegation were Mildred Kaminetsky and Dominic Mancuso from the Globe Sales Co. Now the Globe Sales Co. has big 'defense' orders. They make cartridge bandoliers, aviation targets, splints, and all sorts of things for the army. Furthermore, they refused to hire a Negro girl sent to them by the union to fill a vacancy under our closed shop contract.

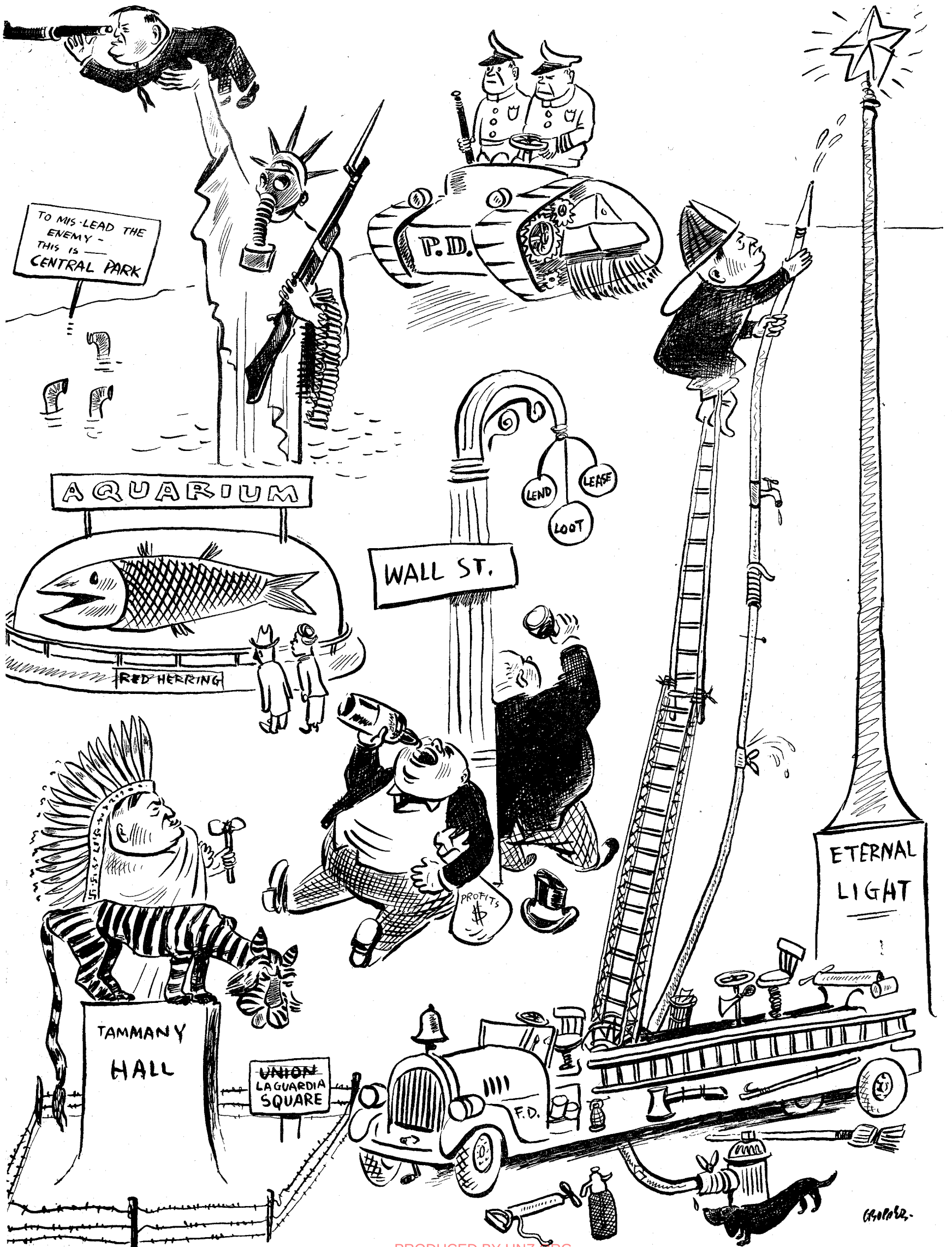
"So when Mildred and Dominic got back on the job they told the workers in the shop about Jim Crow. They showed them that the Globe Sales Co. was trying to use Jim Crow to break the union's contract and get back into open market hiring. So the workers told the boss to hell with his Jim Crow, he'd get a strike if he didn't hire the girl. He hired her all right. Her name is Edna Glasgow and now she's one of the shop stewards down at Globe."

These are the people and this is the spirit of this vital young union.

ERNEST MOORER.



THE HIRING HALL AT LOCAL 65. Announcements of jobs filled by the union. On other walls, charts and maps tell what has been achieved, and what must still be done.



Strictly Personal

by RUTH McKENNEY

DOWN WITH ASH TRAYS!

BEFORE I get started on this opus, I think I had better admit in advance what thousands know—I am not, and never was, even a soupcon of a scientist. Indeed, although I have always eschewed phrenology, astrology, ouija boards, osteopathy, Magic Rays, and Lewis Mumford, I am perfectly willing to agree with the thousands of bitter enemies I am about to make, that I undoubtedly suffer from lingering traces of superstition and obscurantism.

And so, with all my apologies and excuses made well before the evil deed, may I rise to say, dear readers, that I think progressive schools, or anyway, some progressive schools, stink. Now, to cut down the mound of justly irate mail, I rush to state that this backward opinion has nothing to do with the immense and wonderful strides made in bona fide bettering of children's education. I am not advocating, Heaven forbid, a return to McCauley's readers and the three Rs. I think the little red schoolhouse a rather evil relic of an unjust past. I believe the New York state legislature ought to add millions, rather than subtract them, to the school budget, and plenty of this extra dough, in my opinion, ought to go for better pay to highly trained teachers, fancy equipment for laboratories, and so on and so on.

And another thing. I salute, with all my heart, the theoretical progress made in children's education; I only wish every child could attend a school where classes were small enough and politicians sufficiently learned to allow individual study and consideration. Public schools have for the most part left off beating their small charges; it's high time they abandoned the intellectual strait-jacket as an educational method.

But with all this said, my choler still rises as I think of progressive schools, or well, anyway, the three or four progressive schools I have come a cropper with. Currently, I know a set of parents who are pleading with a gang of amateur psychologists in charge of their lassie's educational emporium. Daughter, it seems, was never cut out to be either a potter or a carpenter. Month after month she concocts dismal affairs in the wood-working shop and fearful botches on the clay-turner's wheel. And month after month, the school authorities send home dismal reports of poor Katie's intellectual life. "Manual coordination EXTREMELY POOR," says the report. "We must look for some lack of adjustment in the home." At the extreme lefthand

corner of the report, in a casual hand-written afterthought are always the words, "Katie is three years ahead of her age in reading, has recently written a parody on Hamlet's 'to be or not to be,' and her telegram to the President, opposing war, was quite mature. We feel that perhaps Katie should be withdrawn entirely from history and English classes until she improves her manual coordination."

Katie, in case you wonder, is not quite ten. Her distracted parents, seeking some horrid fault in her home, try to reason with their daughter. "If you could only try a little harder," Katie's mother tells her wistfully. "Really, dear, an ash tray isn't so hard to make." But alas, on school exhibition days, Katie's mother trots dismally about the classrooms noting Buddy Boston's fine glazed clay cat, and Laura Jones' elegant wooden coffee table. In some unlighted corner, tucked away from prying eyes, is Katie's composition book, a poor thing but her own.

And this June brought the cruelest blow of all. Katie's mother had been expecting the worst. Katie had spent most of the spring writing a nine-act play, which she duly noted on the title page was "influenced by Eugene O'Neill and Earl Browder." Katie's father, torn between what he recognized as a purely reactionary, out-of-date pride, and a true foreboding of what Katie's teacher would say when she caught a glimpse of Katie's cock-eyed clay lamp base, begged his erring daughter to put in a little more work on the potter's wheel. But Katie, no doubt as a result of her progressive nursery school days, is a charming but stubborn type. Nothing doing, she said pleasantly but firmly.

So last week the blow fell. The school report stated, rather regretfully, but in black and white, unmistakable language, that Katie had come to the crossroads. The principal felt, on casting up accounts, that what Katie needed was a year in the country "among simple, but kindly people." The lengthy document made clear, too, that Katie was to be shipped to no commuters' paradise, or even a mechanized, electric farm. "There," said the report, with bland assumption, "there, Katie will learn to churn butter by hand, sweep up the cow barn, get in the hay, trim wicks on oil lamps, and make her own clothes."

Rather a stiff order for a girl not yet ten, Katie's father felt, but read on. "For there is no doubt that Katie suffers from a father complex." This nugget made Katie's father hopping mad, but Katie's mother was quite

smug until she came across the next sentence. "Katie is also influenced by the sort of highly intellectual home created by her mother, who no doubt unconsciously influences Katie against pottery and carpentry."

"Me!" cried Katie's mother hotly.

In conclusion the school authorities felt that a first class psychiatrist could exorcise the demons and/or neuroses from Katie's infant mind. Just how the psychiatrist was to get to work on Katie, the milk maid and butter churner, was not made clear, unless the simple, kindly farmer was in disguise and really made his living in a New York office saying to the patient prone on his sofa, "Now just tell me all."

I forgot to say that Katie is also a lousy speller, which the school felt was the subtle result of a quarrel between Katie's mama and papa, a quarrel which took place some four years ago and created a bad neurosis on word formation.

"Oh God," said Katie's father when he had worked his way through the whole report. "We've ruined our only child."

Katie's mama bowed her head. "She'll never grow up to be a potter," Katie's papa continued dismally. "It certainly looks as though she'd turn out to be a lousy intellectual."

"Maybe even write books," cried mama.

It just happens that Katie's papa writes novels and Katie's mama is a physicist. "Well," said Katie's papa, cheerfully, "even if they don't mention it, that was a pretty damn good play she wrote, for her age anyway."

"And only yesterday," said Katie's mama, a flush of pride on her honest face, "she asked me about atoms."

There was a pause. Katie's papa said, "Do you think she would *like* to churn butter?"

Katie's mama laughed. "Neurosis or no neurosis, I'm going to knock a little spelling into our dumpling's head this summer. A writer ought to have a bit of spelling."

And thus was lost a pupil to one of New York's most famous progressive schools. This, by the way, is a darn true story, and for my money, I don't see why advanced schools have to torment young fry with making ash trays, if it appears that the kiddie in question was never born to be a potter, or whatever. Incidentally, in the Soviet Union, where the schools are of, by, and for the workers, an embryo playwright was never bullied into making droshky models. Not that wood-working isn't a fine thing, if you happen to have an itch for it, but surely it's no crime to be an intellectual, either. I should think the wheel has now turned sufficiently to let progressive schools emphasize learning as well as carpentry. And another thing, to my mind there's little to choose between beatings and amateur psychiatry. I am always suspicious of a teacher who blames her pupil's lack of spelling on extremely ancient spats between parents.

I hope I don't seem irascible. But having, at this advanced age, very poor manual coordination myself, my heart goes out to Katie and her fellow sufferers. Hail to progressive education! But down with ash tray

THE DEMOCRATIC IDEA

FOR the cultural life of America this is truly a period of unlimited emergency. This period did not begin with a presidential proclamation. It began with the crippling of the Federal Arts Projects which had made accessible to millions the creative efforts of dramatists, artists, poets, and musicians. It began with the assault on our free public school system by Rapp-Coudert committees in dozens of American communities. It began with the appointment of modern Creels, like Archibald MacLeish and Lowell Mellett, who have for some time presented the threat of intellectual conscription. These were some of the signs, long before an official proclamation, that we were approaching a cultural crisis in this country. And as each day goes by, it becomes more powerfully evident that the free exercise of creative talent is jeopardized as never before in our history.

NEW MASSES has been sensitive to this danger from the start. For the writers and artists who issue this magazine and the readers who support it refuse to ignore the lessons of experience. We remember the cultural holocaust of 1917 when the playing of Beethoven and the teaching of Schiller were officially discountenanced. We remember that the publishers of books and magazines were bigots who barred stories and plays and drawings, whatever their artistic merit, which failed to echo slavishly the pronouncements of official policy. And we recall with pain and shock the degradation of culture wherever a nation allows itself to submit to militarism and reaction: in Germany, where the Nazis trampled upon masterpieces and exiled their creators; in France, where the Daladiers and Blums connived in the destruction which is being completed by their successors, the Laval and Petains; in England, where the press of the working class, sponsored by J. B. S. Haldane and Sean O'Casey, was forcibly silenced by those who vow their allegiance to the democratic idea.

Only those who are deaf to the roar of the savage symphony can fail to recognize the seriousness of the situation in which the arts are being thrust. Only those novelists and critics, sculptors and designers, architects and actors whose devotion to their craft and to their audience is hollow, can avoid taking direct issue with the war-fevered and the money-frenzied who threaten our democratic inheritance.

It is with a deep sense of pride and confidence in the progressive cultural workers of America that we greet this week's concurrent Congresses of Writers and Artists. The League of American Writers, the Artists Congress, and the United American Artists of the CIO represent a new force in our history. In 1917, courageous and enlightened men like John Reed and Randolph Bourne were part of a small and scattered band. They were few against many. But the ideas which they sowed, the superb example which they set, today inspire great numbers of creators who have learned discipline, who have cemented their bonds with the masses, who have understood that they carry on their shoulders the proud responsibility of advancing the tradition of Whitman and Thoreau and Lincoln Steffens. In their ranks may be found the dean of American novelists, Theodore Dreiser, and the dean of American drawing, Art Young. And in their ranks may be found the sturdiest representatives of the newest generation of American creators.

Theirs is not an empty gesture. It is the authors of surrender, the summer soldiers like Vincent Sheean and Lewis Mumford, who betray panic and call with pathetic frenzy on unlistening ears. It is Malcolm Cowley who reflects his alienation from the American masses when he cries with cowardly hysteria that "As a political force, the intellectuals have probably been defeated for this generation, but that is no reason for despairing of the world; it will go on without them." Go on without the Cowleys and Lerner the

world indeed will. But the cultural spokesmen of the people have not been defeated, they have only now come in sight of victory. Out of this furnace a new steel is taking shape.

The instigators of war and reaction are resorting to a strategy of panic. Those who cannot persuade by reason must endeavor to provoke by hysteria and force. They must create an atmosphere in which the ordinary process of cause and effect seems to have disappeared. They seek to foster the illusion that we now find ourselves in a mysterious universe in which the valid analyses of one year make no sense in the next. They are persuading some intellectuals to do a lot of blind flying—without scientific instruments. The press, the radio, and the pulpit form a picture of chaos and black night. The unnumbered tribe of columnists and commentators daily ride their dizzy steeplechase to death.

All this sound and fury has, among other objectives, the purpose of manipulating words and issues in such a way as to obscure the basic structure of our society. Correspondingly, the function of progressive writers and artists is to resist this hysteria and to keep the record straight. It is true, of course, that since the organization of the League of American Writers and the American Artists Congress many real and profound changes have taken place in this country and in the world at large. But these changes have not significantly altered the underlying social relations which these organizations discussed at their first sessions. Events have had the effect rather of clarifying and intensifying these relations. Our problems are not miraculously new. The historical epoch in which we live is not a series of accidents. It is governed by laws which may be objectively studied, it is divided by conflicts which have ascertainable causes and consequences, and it must be controlled democratically and scientifically if human and cultural needs are to be authentically satisfied. Progressive writers and artists will not be deterred from their main job by the propaganda of "extraordinary" times and "extraordinary" measures.

For it is impressively true that in every great period of crisis the progressive creator finds his genuine power just as surely as the servile creator loses it. The greatness of Paine and Freneau, of the Abolitionist writers, of Barbusse and Gorky, was born in struggle. In the years of struggle against the Crown, Milton forged his epic vision. Truth in literature cannot be permanently suppressed. The poems which Burns could not get published in 1792 are sung by the people today. In 1819, when workers were being massacred in Manchester, Shelley could not find a publisher for "The Masque of Anarchy" and "Song to the Men of England," but their profound truths have stirred the generations since.

The impulse of these men, their irrevocable decision, was to fight for the values which could alone give meaning to life. They were on the side of history and they have prevailed. The period in which we live is fraught with obstacles for the writer and artist, but it is, also, more richly and more deeply, fraught with opportunities. The major themes are at hand. The people are thinking and feeling, and for him who would articulate their desires and interpret their lives there is an invigorating challenge. It is an inescapable challenge. There are only two alternatives. One is to distort and finally to kill one's talents in the interests of war and poverty and oppression. The other is to release one's talents in the interests of truth and freedom.

The hundreds of writers and artists who will hold their congress this week have made their choice. Their decision is to live. And an awakening America will listen eagerly to the clear voices expressing its deep will for peace, for plenty, and for cultural freedom.

NEW MASSES

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Syria Next?

SURELY the most preposterous "victor" in all the history of warfare is the man who went to Brenner Pass the other day from Rome to be informed of the next steps that Hitler had planned, and what he himself was expected to do. Those steps are in a strategic sense not difficult to guess. For Crete was only the stepping-stone to more tangible stakes: the Middle East, northern Africa, and the whole Mediterranean. From Crete it is only 400 miles to the British fleet base at Alexandria and little farther to the Suez Canal. And from Crete, too, and Syrian air bases the Nazis may be able to make untenable the British island of Cyprus, and thence to land troops in Syria. (A Nazi infantry detachment is already reported to have landed.) This would mean the outflanking of Iraq, as well as Palestine and Trans-Jordan, through which Iraq oil is piped to the Mediterranean port of Haifa. Hanson Baldwin, military expert of the *New York Times*, is puzzled by the German attack on Crete when "the same purposes might have been accomplished—through Turkey—from Syria, without invading Crete." But any schoolboy who isn't infected with the stupid theory of the "weakness" of the Soviet Union could tell Mr. Baldwin why Hitler preferred the costly operation against Crete to moving through Turkey.

The importance to British imperialism of the Middle East, gateway to India and Asia, was underscored by Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden's speech outlining "peace aims." He expressed "great sympathy with Syrian aspirations for independence" and support for efforts toward closer unity among the Arab peoples. The cynicism of this latest attempt to win the friendship of the Arab world is equaled only by the British juggling with the utopian Zionist dream of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Having given contradictory promises to the Jews and the Arabs during the first World War and betrayed both, Britain is now busy playing the same game in this war. The sudden interest in Syrian independence (the people of India will appreciate this!) is, of course, the cream of the jest. As for nominally independent Iraq, whose troops two days after Eden's speech were forced to yield to superior arms, a London dispatch in the *New York Times* unwittingly tipped Churchill's and Eden's hand, by referring to "the rebellion in Iraq against Britain."

In Eden's speech there were the barrenness and laborious vagueness that characterize

most of these efforts to conceal imperialism's real war aims. His talk of social security for the entire world is a cheap attempt to out-promise Hitler. And in Eden's case, as in Hitler's, it is a promise to make the earth stand still—a pledge that the social order which has produced poverty, wars, and every kind of insecurity for most of the world's population will cease to be itself.

In one respect, however, Eden's speech revealed more than it intended. His statement that Britain's political and military terms for peace would aim to subject Germany to a virtual second Versailles points up the imperialist character of the war and gives the lie to his promise of "a peaceful brotherhood of nations, with due liberty to each to develop its own balanced economic life and its characteristic culture." That ideal is realizable, of course, but only if the peoples of all countries act to take the future out of the hands of these architects of tyranny and hate.

"Peace" Talk

THE sudden return of Ambassador Winant from London has highlighted the peace rumors that have been floating around for several weeks. John O'Donnell and Doris Fleeson report from Washington in the *New York Daily News* that "There has been more talk of peace in this capital in the last week than at any time since the first week of September 1939." They cite the recent appeal by Lord Woolton, Minister of Food, to the American people to deny itself food as more evidence that Britain, by hints and threats, is telling the United States that unless it gets into immediate shooting war, the British will come to terms with Germany.

This theory is given further weight by the fact that in Scotland there sits a sphinx, born in Egypt and recently arrived from Germany, whose riddle Churchill promised to reveal, but didn't. The British government is sitting tight on the Hess case and refusing to tell the public what it knows. Is it possible that the British are using Hess in order to turn the heat on the United States?

We do not profess to know what is going on behind the scenes. Imperialism being what it is, the activities of diplomatic chancelleries are not likely to be motivated by idealism and virtue. But it is well to bear a few fundamentals in mind. As R. Palme Dutt pointed out in *NEW MASSES* months ago, the British ruling class, in waging its war, chose to come to terms with American rather than German imperialism. But with every advance of the German armies into the choice preserves of the British empire, the price of American collaboration and continued war becomes higher unless the United States can swing the scales decisively before it is too late. Our feeling is that the major trend of both British and American policy continues to be based on the calculation of a long war with full American participation; in that case the peace talk would be merely a bluff by the British to speed up armed intervention by this country. However, the British defeats have no doubt

given an impetus to counter-currents in the ruling classes of both countries. How influential these are remains to be seen.

Mr. Hull's Gesture

THE United States was a late comer to the Orient, and in the imperialist division of territorial spoils, came off rather poorly. But at the close of World War I, this country, richest and most powerful in the capitalist world, could afford not to take too seriously its rivals' territorial concessions: for the US had the resources and the financial reserves to gain the major share of trade in the Far East, and with trade went imperialist influence. In consequence, the United States has always insisted on the Open Door in China—the right of all comers to participate "on equal terms" in exploiting the Chinese market.

The Japanese invasion of Manchuria began to shut the Open Door, a process continued ever since. It is therefore interesting to find Secretary of State Hull reaffirming the Open Door policy in his "reassuring" letter to the Chinese Foreign Minister. After the Chinese war is over, said Hull, the United States will relinquish its extra-territorial rights in China and will be inclined to lend its weight to the attempt to do away with similar rights of other nations. So long as the Chinese market remains open, he said in effect, all will be well.

Washington has promised the end of extra-territorial rights in China before—and still the great nations continue to occupy Chinese territory. Mr. Hull's generous gesture, in the light of former solemn American pledges, does not seem particularly meaningful. On the other hand, there is more to it than might at first meet the eye. Tucked away in the press are constant references to an Anglo-Japanese rapprochement—and clearly only the United States would suffer from such friendly negotiations between its two most powerful rivals in the Orient. Hull's remarks on extra-territorial rights, more precious to Japan and Great Britain than to the United States, and his intimation of friendship to China, are a backhanded warning to Japan. It is all-important to American policy that Japan play ball with American imperialism. If America is to wage war in the Atlantic and Africa, as the President is so desirous of doing, then first of all questions in the Pacific must be settled. Japan is warned that it had better play the game the Washington way.

No doubt, appeasement of Japan by the United States is well started. The Chinese Communist spokesman in Chungking, Chou En-lai, has warned against Roosevelt intervention to end the Chinese war at the expense of democratic China. The rumor that the American Pacific fleet is moving into the Atlantic—which means that Japan has promised to be good—is borne out by such informed observers as Allen and Pearson, and even hinted at by the President in his emergency speech. And then there is Walter Lippmann, who can be counted upon to speak the minds of the leading American imperialists. Says

Lippmann: "Thus we are now in a position to turn to the Japanese with the object of rendering impossible the war in the Pacific—a war which would be a ruinous and foolish war. . . . It can be averted by resolute action and a candid recognition of our own and of Japan's vital interests. . . . We should open up this prospect of serious negotiation in the Far East based upon an honorable peace in the Chinese war. . . ."

To which can be added only the sentiment: "Heaven preserve the Chinese from a peace called 'honorable' by Walter Lippmann."

Irish Victory

FRIENDS of the Irish people everywhere are celebrating the thumping victory they won over Churchill last week when the British Prime Minister backed down in his scheme to enforce conscription in the six counties of Northern Ireland. The arch-imperialist who heads the British empire has never forgiven Eire's neutrality. "Merciless enemy of everything Irish" as the New York *Irish Echo* calls him, he has shown more zeal and initiative in his blockade of the Emerald Isles than he has evidenced in thwarting Hitler on the seas. Food and fuel have already been rationed, and according to recent dispatches, restaurants serve only four ounces of bread with each meal. Churchill has really never accepted the 1938 treaty, signed when Malcolm MacDonald was Dominion Secretary, which, perforce returned to Eire those ports which had long been held captive as bases for Britain. Churchill has been one of the most fervid protagonists of partition—the splitaway from Eire of the six counties of Ulster that are controlled by a set of stooges for Whitehall.

The most significant aspect of the victory against conscription was the way it was won. Unity of both North and South Ireland against the measure was irresistible. Anti-conscription pledges were taken by thousands both in Ulster and in Eire. Marching men on both sides of the line told the British warlord that nowhere on Irish soil would conscription be allowed. The issue transcended all differences and quarrels of Protestants and Catholics. The *Irish Independent*, reporting the Belfast meeting at which 10,000 men took the pledge, declared: "History was made in Belfast yesterday when Captain Dennis, Ireland leader of the Ulster Union Club—a Protestant body—attended a big anti-conscription rally and declared: 'After 150 years Catholic and Protestant once more have united on a fundamental issue.'" That unity, incidentally, leaped across the Atlantic and was reflected among the Irish people and their friends here. They deeply resent President Roosevelt's attitude which closely parallels that of Churchill. His attempts to force Eire from its neutrality have become notorious. All friends of Ireland are insisting that FDR lift the bans on the feeding and arming of the Irish people. His recent gesture—under extreme pressure—of offering half a million dollars worth of foodstuffs, solves nothing.

Neutral Eire must be permitted to purchase all the necessities she needs: whether foodstuffs to feed her hungry, or arms to defend herself against any attempts—British or Nazi to violate her neutrality.

Food for Europe

WHILE in America the administration worries about how to fatten people for war and still make it harder for them to buy food, reports from Europe tell of ever more frightful privation among the people. Where there is not actual starvation—and almost no region has escaped it—there is rationing so severe that life is barely sustained. And, despite the relatively vast abundance of America's food supplies, Europe's food problems are not unrelated to our own. In this country, too, people starve or go underfed because, as Eva Lapin points out in her article on page six, they haven't access to our large food supplies. Our "surpluses" pile up but they reach neither the hungry of Europe nor of America. In fact, Secretary of Agriculture Wickard advises more plowing under to sustain the price of wheat, cotton, and tobacco. And Lord Woolton, British Food Minister—whose country is the only one receiving nourishment from America—arrogantly suggests that we might send more if our people will just go without milk for one day each week and cut down on other foods.

Someone should advise his lordship that appeals of this kind are very poor propaganda here. For the people of America know it is not necessary that they do without in order to feed other peoples; they know not only the abundance of America but its huge potential abundance. And a great many of them already know that only capitalism has made this abundance a "problem" instead of a blessing. Finally, the people, with no stake in the victory of either side in this war, are concerned with hunger in all countries as well as Britain. It is not for America's rulers to decide whether or not we should feed Europe's starving populations. This decision must be made and carried out by the people, with the procurement and distribution of supplies effected through an international labor organization. Only in this way can it be done on a humanitarian basis, without regard to the aims of imperialists who look upon food as another weapon of war.

Not a Fireside Chat

ON MEMORIAL Day, the fighting Congressman Vito Marcantonio of New York, spoke on a national radio hookup in reply to the President's unofficial declaration of war made with such fanfare three nights before. It was the first direct, unequivocal answer made by a man in public office.

It is precisely due to your overwhelming opposition to war that the President sought by means of a fireside speech proclamation to take the issue of war and peace away from the Congress of

the United States, and away from you, the American people, thereby making it appear that war was inevitable and that the issue was closed. You, the American people, can get our nation out of war and keep it out of war. . . . Hitlerism can and must be defeated. However, Hitlerism cannot be defeated by plunging into this imperialist war to insure the victory of the Wall Street-Downing Street brand of Hitlerism. . . . The only weapon against Hitlerism is real democracy with no "ifs" and "buts". . . .

Marcantonio's words express the desire of the American people. Yet, aside from the *Daily Worker* no New York newspaper, and in all probability no commercial paper throughout the country, so much as mentioned the speech. Nevertheless, as though in proof of the validity of the speech, the National Maritime Union at a general membership meeting unanimously urged its officers to petition the CIO for a nationwide congress of trade unions and people's organizations "for the purpose of organizing the fight to get out and stay out of the war." The NMU called upon the Greater New York CIO Council to issue a call for a mass peace rally in the Yankee Stadium in which the representatives of the entire labor movement, AFL, CIO, and railroad brotherhoods, would participate.

Oklahoma Story

ON JUNE 2 a woman, Ina Wood, went on trial before an Oklahoma County Court, with charges against her that may bring a twenty-year sentence. Those charges are two: possession of progressive books and membership in the Communist Party. Her husband, Robert Wood, and two other defendants, Eli Jaffee and Alan Shaw, have already been sentenced on one of these counts—ten years and a \$5,000 fine—and face trial on the other.

But that is only the bare synopsis of Oklahoma's story of terrorism. Two days before Mrs. Wood's trial opened, her local defense lawyer, George Croom, was arrested by the FBI and questioned for twenty-four hours. He was held without charge and the only "evidence" leading to his arrest was his possession of some literature which was being featured in the prosecution of his clients. Mr. Croom, it should be observed, is not an "outside lawyer"—he is Oklahoma born and raised. Another development: while the jury was out, during Eli Jaffee's trial, Judge Babcock left the court and took a trip across the county line. According to Oklahoma law, that automatically suspended court and invalidated the jury's verdict. But the court overruled defense motions for a new trial—and raised Jaffee's bail from \$2,500 to \$10,000 pending appeal! Moreover, the court also demands \$2,500 bail on the count for which he is still to be tried.

The Oklahoma cases are being appealed—to higher state courts and to the American people themselves. The latter have already responded with a barrage of protests directed at the prosecutors.

RED HERRINGS AND STUFFED SHIRTS

He pushed his way into the places where history was being made. But he understood nothing. Isidor Schneider discusses Louis Fischer's vain confessional.

MEN AND POLITICS, by Louis Fischer. Duell, Sloan & Pearce. \$3.50.

ORDINARY times the pretentiousness, ineptitude, vulgarity, and mountainous vanity of this book would have been sufficient to discredit it. But these are not ordinary times. When the corruption of a society proceeds so far that the custodians of its culture take their truths from convicted felons it is not to be expected that the ordinary operations of reason and discrimination will be followed.

The advertising on *Men and Politics* shows for what end it is produced. Soviet peace in the face of the agony of capitalist empire is a torment and a danger to imperialism. It is necessary to keep up anti-Soviet hysteria with every fear-infection at the command of the professional inoculators of panic.

"They will call him a traitor . . . a turncoat! The faithful who always listen in on the party line . . ." intones the copywriter, with the chest-thumping Mr. Fischer at his elbow.

Mr. Fischer's easy martyrdom recalls the heroism described in the *New Republic* a few issues back, in an account of the "sacrifices" of the former "Lefts." They spoke, those brave men, in "smoky rooms and drafty halls" and might even have caught colds for the cause!

I am afraid that Mr. Fischer will have to wait long for his martyrdom, after having announced it. Nobody from the Left will call him a traitor. He has been only too true to his cause, the cause of Louis Fischer.

Because it is an attempt to rationalize, as a turn from a "cause," what is his characteristic, individualistic ego drive, *Men and Politics* becomes, despite its blustering vanity, a confession of failure. Even Fischer, at times, seems dimly aware of it. By his very insensitiveness and push he had butted his way into the places where history was being made. But finding himself there he understood nothing and can only report that he was there and met important people.

Out of the muddle, the posturing, the contradictions of this unconscious confessional we can discern three main themes: the relations between the Allies and Germany; the fascist destruction of Spain; and the Soviet Union in its internal and in its foreign policy.

As regards the relations between the Allies and Germany Fischer repeats what discerning historians have established, but in clumsy versions of his own. He cannot resist, however, the temptations of the headline. In each succeeding phase he forgets his last finality. Thus,

after having paid the usual historical respects to the spinners of fate at Versailles, he writes "the American stock market collapse and the subsequent economic slump had more to do with the advent of Hitler than the Treaty of Versailles."

Not a word of the general decline of capitalism, not a word of its intensifying contradictions, not a word of the predicament of capitalist imperialism with one-sixth of the world removed from its operations just when its rivalries and its hunger had become most acute; not a word of the class struggle. Instead we have such profundities, worthy of Hearst's *American Weekly*: "Installment plans, eighteen million bathtubs, and millions of automobiles, symbols of the Coolidge Age, were as destructive of sobriety as bootleg liquor, and the crash came on October 24." By the stately strides of Mr. Fischer's logic the American family's intemperance in the matter of bathtubs produced Hitler.

If such complete lack of understanding marks Mr. Fischer's treatment of Germany and the Allies, it is confusions of motive that mark his treatment of Spain. It is in the Spanish chapters that one senses Fischer's urgent need to rationalize. There his egotism becomes most exaggerated because it is there that he hopes to find absolution for what he fears will be considered his "betrayal" of the Soviet Union. There he pounds the kettle drums of his sacrifices for democracy, there he bugles his proofs of his capacity for devotion to a cause.

Otherwise his reiteration of the share of England and France—and the United States—in the destruction of Spain might have had value, especially in these days when the epic of the Spanish struggle seems to be becoming the field of the literary disillusionists. Anything that helps to keep clear the comparison of the nobility and strength of a democratic people and the treachery and impotence of the rulers of bourgeois democracy could be of value. But Mr. Fischer incredibly obtrudes himself. One marvels at the majestic proportions of his insensitiveness: at some points it becomes obscure as to whether Negrin was or was not Mr. Fischer's Spanish front

in Mr. Fischer's conduct of the Spanish Republican government. But throughout, Spain serves Mr. Fischer mainly as a foil in his duel with the Soviet Union.

Perhaps the best way to give the particular flavor of Mr. Fischer's incomparable insensitiveness is to quote the first paragraph of the chapter following his last full chapter on Spain:

My friends have always predicted that some day I would "settle down"—and I suppose gather moss. I arrived in New York on May 1, aboard the *SS Normandie*, which also [sic] carried Negrin and a party of Loyalists who were en route to Mexico to see about the Vita treasure. I love the heat of summer. I played tennis, swam, canoed, and thought of settling down. Meanwhile I scampered about America, delivering lectures.

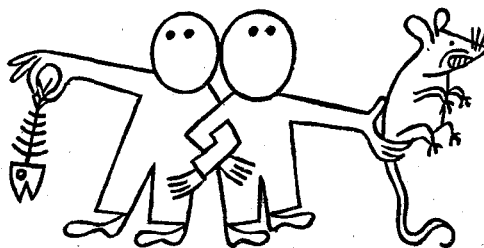
Oh, that unerring scamper that always ended on the greenest lawns and in the best company! On such scampers, especially after August, that year, a high kick at the Soviet Union was always sure of applause.

We come now to the consideration of Mr. Fischer on the Soviet Union. We might begin with his own fond self-characterization:

With the exception of teaching school in Philadelphia for half a year in 1917 and work in a New York news agency in 1920, I have never held a job and I have always tried hard not to get one. . . . I have never been a member of any political party or of a trade union or, after my youth, of any club. I am essentially a libertarian and resent shackles, even personal ones.

We will not be doing Mr. Fischer any injustice, taking the context from which this quotation is drawn, if we substitute "individualist" for the rationalizing word "libertarian," and "responsibilities" for "shackles." It will be obvious that an individualist of that authentic stamp would scarcely be suited to the understanding of a collective society.

He is conscious, of course, that the question would arise as to how it was that a man of discernment had not made his disagreeable discoveries about the Soviet Union earlier? He did, says Mr. Fischer; but since he had made the cause of Mr. Fischer the cause of Spain, it was impossible to hurt the Soviet Union without hurting Spain, since the Soviet Union was the only great power aiding democratic Spain. At the end of the war, after expenditures in lives and in materials otherwise accounted for, Spain owed the Soviet Union \$120,000,000—an indication of the extent of Soviet aid. This is a difficult admission for Mr. Fischer to make, along with the later



admission that the Soviet Union was the only country to notify the Czech government that it stood ready, at call, to come to its defense. The bourgeois democracies, Mr. Fischer admits, betrayed Spain and Czechoslovakia. How long after these two impressive testimonials to the honor and capacity of the bourgeois democracies, following after Manchuria, Ethiopia, and Vienna, was the Soviet Union to leave its Western defenses dependent on their good will?

It was the Soviet-German non-aggression pact, according to Mr. Fischer, that left him free to aim his critical spitballs against the Soviet Union. Ignoring the negotiations and events which preceded the pact, he attributes the pact directly to the purges and the trials. He is partly right, but not in the sense he intends. The purges and the trials, by eliminating Hitler's fifth column in the Soviet Union, forced Hitler to turn to other fields and sue for peace with the Soviet Union. Thus the purges did contribute to the Soviet-German pact.

It is on the purges that Mr. Fischer concentrates. As it happened his Soviet friendships included a number of persons who were convicted. It is hard of course for a Mr. Fischer to place the Soviet government's judgment of these people above his own. Mr. Fischer can supply his horror story (for which he totals millions of victims), with no other motive than Stalin's determination to replace Trotsky completely and irrevocably in the historical association with Lenin. The descent into the "oriental enigma" is rapid. A few weeks ago Mr. Fischer in the *Nation* was explaining Stalin's premiership by his "Oriental" passion for titles.

To horrify the reader the more Mr. Fischer builds up the purged as men of courage, devotion, and intelligence. But that leads him into a dilemma. For his explanation of their confessions at their trials is that they had been promised their lives if they confessed. The brave, the devoted, the honorable are consequently offered anew as cravens who consented to blacken their own characters before the world, and load themselves with the guilt of the most despicable crimes in order to eke out dishonored lives. Mr. Fischer does little service to the memory of his friends. The truth is kinder to them than Mr. Fischer's avenging fabrication.

Mr. Fischer does his job by omission as well as by commission. Two of his omissions were so conspicuous that they were noted in otherwise approving reviews. Joseph Barnes in the New York *Herald Tribune Books* mentioned Mr. Fischer's silence regarding the events that preceded the pact—and explained it. Apparently, since history disagreed with Mr. Fischer, he snubbed it. And, Frederick Schuman, in *PM*, remarked on Mr. Fischer's avoidance of discussion of the anti-Comintern fifth column activities in the USSR.

Peculiarly offensive is another omission. Mr. Fischer dwells upon what he calls Russian nationalism, the restoration of historically progressive figures, such as Peter the

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Great, on the more affirmative attitudes toward Russian culture. From Mr. Fischer's record one would gather that that marvelous gain of the Bolshevik revolution, the equality of nationalities and cultures, was being lost in a new Russian racism carried through by Stalin the Georgian. What Fischer omits is that, first, the new historical attitudes are a correction of excessive devaluations of an earlier period and, more importantly, that *simultaneously* Kalmyks, Georgians, Armenians, Jews, Tajiks, etc., were making similar rediscoveries and revaluations of their own past, that it was a *Soviet peoples'*, not a Russian phenomenon. Thus Mr. Fischer slanders by his silence as well as by his statements.

Mr. Fischer presents his new heroes. One of them is Churchill of whom he writes "... a fervid devotee of freedom. It is not merely a war motto or a war aim, but a component part of his life fiber. Of course there is India. That is a serious blemish. But whose mentality has no blind spots?" That "blind spot" is the measure not only of Mr. Fischer's colossal insensitiveness, but of his colossal ignorance. What understanding of international problems can a writer have by whom the fate of 350 million people of India and the central problem of British imperialism is dismissed as Churchill's pardonable "blind spot"?

There is one group to whom I can honestly recommend *Men and Politics*—those eccentric scholars who make weird compilations such as dictionaries of cliches, anthologies of banalities, handbooks of sycophancies. From the following samples they can judge what treasures await them in Mr. Fischer's 657 congested pages:

The symbol of London might be a Bobby or a John Bull or Colonel Blimp. A Prussian grenadier could stand for Berlin. Moscow is a worker with a dark cap on his head and a hammer in his two hands. Even Vienna in its good days was a man with a feather in his green hat, a cape over his shoulders and a gold chain across his bulging vest. All these cities are men. But Paris is a woman, a woman who knows how to choose her clothes. . . . Russia—ever visionary and missionary. . . .

I met Lindbergh again several years later at the estate of Thomas Lamont, Morgan partner. . . .

And I must note a paragraph that gave me pleasure though no doubt it violates the code of ethics of the professional anti-Sovieters:

He [Eugene Lyons] rarely if ever visited Soviet factories which were social, political, and cultural centers as well as production units, and when he visited a village it usually was to buy antique furniture. He had a real grievance; he had expected the Bolsheviks to open their arms and homes to him, for he had been a radical in New York. But when they treated him as they did all other non-Soviet foreigners he was quite disappointed, and that colored his thinking and ultimately changed his views. Nobody who depends on society life can be very happy in Moscow. Lyons writes well and has an irritability which can be mistaken for moral indignation. But he makes no pretense of profundity, and when he enjoyed the rare privilege of

an exclusive interview with Stalin he talked about his little daughter Jeanie and he let Stalin talk about his little daughter Svetlana, and he never put a single serious question to Stalin. Lyons admitted this later and kicked himself for it.

Probably we shall soon have Mr. Lyons' *tu quoque* to Mr. Fischer.

In 1938 I discussed doing a book on the Soviet Union with a number of publishers. The publishers were interested and began discussing its "attitude." They wanted to be assured that I would be "objective" in my treatment. When it came to definitions, "objectivity" turned out to be a clear bias against the Soviet Union. Our negotiations broke down. I have watched publishing lists and since then only one pro-Soviet book, the Dean of Canterbury's, has been published, and this was boycotted or assassinated in the press; further its promotion and distribution have largely been carried on by volunteers, individuals, and working class organizations. But in the same period dozens of anti-Soviet books have appeared and the apparatus of the publishing world was put at their disposal with unprecedented coordination. The Book-of-the-Month Club "chose" two within six months; the book review mediums accorded them disproportionate space; there was a peculiar indulgence on the part of city desks to publicity stories about them; and radio stations were unwontedly hospitable to interviews.

This phenomenon has its meaning apart from the more obvious Red-baiting intent. Its purpose is to cloud with as much suspicion and slander as possible the one country in the world whose example makes a mockery of imperialism, reveals its murderous insanity. It is for their services in smoke-screening that example that the Fischers are being given such a long and conspicuous day.

ISIDOR SCHNEIDER.

Subtle Balance

THE MAN ON THE QUEUE, by Sidney Alexander. James A. Decker Press. Prairie City, Ill. Cloth, \$1.50; paper, 75 cents.

READERS of NEW MASSES need not be persuaded that Sidney Alexander is one of the most thoughtful and vigorous of the young progressive poets. His contributions to these pages have always been distinguished by their freshness, intensity, and wit. Alexander is deeply concerned with arriving at an ordered sense of values which can guide the writer through the turmoil of contemporary conflict, and his first volume, ranging widely in form and theme, reflects this search for a meaningful integration. His style, it is true, is as yet incompletely defined; his imagery is occasionally too self-conscious and strained. But one feels, in reading his lyrics and verse plays, a seriousness of conception and craftsmanship which is clearly molding one of the authentic poetic talents of our day.

Alexander's most characteristic and successful poems maintain a subtle balance between the personal and political theme. At his best,

he richly illustrates an awareness that our basic human emotions, our joy and grief, our hope and despair, are deeply involved in social relations. The individual event (the "I") and the social complex in which it is situated (the "We") are fused into a simultaneous and enriched experience. Similarly, the poet combines a sober perception that we live "on the hillsides of volcanoes" with a militant confidence in "a world ungangrenous with poor: a song of suns."

The finest lyrics in this volume fall into three groups. One, illustrated by "A Letter to My Wife," evolves a new form of sensibility for love poetry. The image of war and death hovers over the lovers:

"Suddenly at the kiss: the laughter over the coffee: pervading our privatest marrow."

And yet, avoiding panic, clinging precariously, their love blooms at the brink of imminent lava, and petals sing. Love does not become a mockery, as in so many recent poems of war cynicism; nor is it an escape. The deep-felt tenderness of human relations is heightened by "the prophecy of knives." The same note is struck in "The Plane," in which the poet, observing the gay children in the park, notes the contrast between innocent laughter and the leering threat of the bomber.

In a second group of lyrics, Alexander reveals a delightful satirical vein which is all the more effective for its restraint and perfection of form. In "Buddha," for example, we meet the "squatting involuted self" of the fat image lying heavily on the lands while his worshippers "traced in the wrinkles of his paunch the implications of the soul . . ."

And then one day the angry poor
dismayed the metaphysic wits . . .
Fat Buddha hit the temple floor
And smashed his fourteen arms to bits
Fat Buddha, Oh fat Buddha!
You are dead, dead, dead . . .
And Tse-Tsin with a polished hoe
is reaping corn instead. . . ."

Similarly, in "Broad and Wall," where "sunless light seeps green as dollar-bills," and "By the Bridle Path—Central Park," with "the debutante bed-pulsing on the dapple-grey."

A third group of poems which I enjoyed particularly deals more directly with topical and political subjects. "As Surely as the Grass Shall Split the Rock," the most interesting of this group, is a caustic treatment of the betrayal of France by Petain, Laval, and Daladier, who are advised, at the end:

the swastika-fob hanging from history's watch—
go home and hear the ticking in your ears,
draw the curtains against the invading sun,
enjoy the last quarter hour, fix the latch,
sink wearily into the soothing lace. . . .

A hand shall pull the quilt over your face.

The least effective poems are those in which Alexander over-intellectualizes his metaphors and gets bogged down in difficult rhetoric. It



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CRITICS SESSION: 2 P.M.—5 P.M.
Chairman: Samuel Sillen
Four major papers on certain critical standards followed by discussion from the floor with delegates to the Congress participating.

**SCREEN WRITERS SESSION:
8 P.M.—11 P.M.**
Papers by Hollywood writers on "Anti-Semitism in Hollywood," "Movies and War," "Technical and Structural Trends in the Movies," "Motion Picture Criticism," followed by discussion.

**LABOR JOURNALISM SESSION:
8 P.M.—11 P.M.**
Chairman: Alexander L. Crosby
Three important discussions on labor journalism by working newspapermen and labor representatives.

**YOUNG WRITERS SESSION:
8 P.M.—11 P.M.**
Chairman: William Gresham
Established writers in discussion with young writers on marketing problems, technique, editorial taboos, etc.

SUNDAY, JUNE 8
DRAMATISTS SESSION: 10 A.M.—1 P.M.
Chairman: Marc Blitzstein
"Broadway Battleground," "The Waiting Theatres," and "Technical and Social Changes in Our Theatres for the Past Fifty Years," by three established dramatic experts.

**JUVENILE WRITERS SESSION:
10 A.M.—1 P.M.**
Chairman: Ruth Epperson Kennell
Papers and discussion by six juvenile writers and artists. Comment and discussion.

**LATIN-AMERICAN SESSION:
10 A.M.—1 P.M.**
Chairman: Samuel Putnam
Three Latin-American prize-winning writers in speeches and discussion of Inter-American cultural relations and problems.

GENERAL SESSION: 2 P.M.—5 P.M.
Chairman: Henry Hart
The most important cultural subjects of the day presented by outstanding writers and artists. Discussion by delegates to the Congress.

**POETS, SONG-WRITERS, FOLK SINGERS
SESSION: 8 P.M.—11 P.M.**
Chairman: Alfred Kreymborg
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is possible that the poorest of these poems, like "Fist into Earth," are also the earliest. Certainly, lines like the following have an undigested and unpoetic character, despite their noisome effect:

Puddle our steel of stars, fuse fist and dream!
And let our cordons in relentless tread
rank round, and twine their hate into a rope
coiling its nevermore . . . for shock on shock
have cloven us in zeal, and gears of hope
impel the dried-up pistons of our bones.

This over-reaching for effect obscures and muddles a number of lines in the volume. It appears usually at moments when the poet seems uncertain of his intention. The texture of Alexander's verse is rich enough without obtrusive lines like "lance no arrows at a mystic dawn." In his effort to communicate the garish and raucous in modern life, Alexander too frequently resorts to word doublings and forced linguistic twists: "The brain was Times-Squared to a numbing buzz" or the even worse line "reiterated, rose-petaled, and cheap."

Much of this strain is avoided in the two verse plays which Alexander wrote for the radio, a medium which requires immediate intelligibility. In "The Hawk and the Flesh" the poet deals with two brothers on opposite sides in the Spanish war. The situation is melodramatic but moving. In "Where Jonathan Came" Alexander portrays the witchcraft trials in Salem, Massachusetts, 1692. This play, which has distinct implications for our own witch hunt days, deserves to be much better known. The basic moods of Alexander's verse are present here: his warm sympathy for the underprivileged and oppressed, his indignation at those who provoke hatred and usurp power, his admiration for those who have the courage to fight for a progressive idea at whatever personal cost.

SAMUEL SILLEN.

Brief Review

A MESSAGE TO AMERICAN JEWRY, by Rabbi Moses Miller. Jewish Peoples Committee. 5 cents.

The report to the fifth national convention of the Jewish Peoples Committee by Rabbi Miller is as clear a statement as has been made on the outlook of the progressive Jew today. The usefulness of this appraisal cannot be exaggerated. In precise, frank terms, Rabbi Miller discusses not only the growing persecution of Jews, but the social and economic reasons of this horror. Only in the Soviet Union, he points out, have the Jewish people found security and safety. Why, he continues, "can we not, in this great democracy, in the United States, do likewise?" And in logical, frank fashion, Rabbi Miller exposes the growth of anti-Semitism in America. He exposes the misleaders in Jewish life, the appeasers among the wealthy Jews who would condone discrimination in return for their own security.

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MEETING A CHALLENGE

The artists join the writers in a concurrent congress in defense of their craft. Affirming the creative spirit . . . Joy Davidman takes a gander at the "quickies."

UNITING with the writers in defense of culture, the progressive artists of the country meet this week at the Hotel Commodore (June 6, 7, and 8) in a Congress of American Artists, under the joint auspices of the United American Artists, CIO, and the American Artists Congress. The ominous character of the hour is clearly understood by those more than one hundred artists who have signed the call: "In this grave hour, mindful of our responsibility to the art of our time and conscious of the danger that increasingly threatens both our heritage of freedom and our growing democratic culture, we issue this call. . . . Today the fascist threat has come full circle. In a traditionally free and liberty loving America, fascism comes in the name of anti-fascism. All the enemies of progress suddenly

become defenders of democracy. Our liberties are destroyed to defend liberty and the policies to which our people are committed by their government, in the name of peace, border ever closer on overt war."

The call continues: "We believe that the defense of America begins not with steps towards war and dictatorship but with the defense of our basic liberties, standards of living, and cultural opportunities. Because we know that our work as free artists is indissolubly linked with continuing peace and the dominance in American life of democratic principles, we call our fellow artists to this congress to consider the following questions:

"1. What can artists do to oppose the high-pressure drive towards war and the increasing use of fascist solutions for the problems facing the American people?

"2. What can be done to expand and make permanent the government art programs, stimulate the private market and provide more opportunities for artists to work at their profession?

"3. How can we aid the development of a genuine cultural interchange between the peoples of the Americas?

"4. How can we preserve the widespread community interest of the past decade and further develop the new audiences that have played so important a role in the renaissance of American culture?" Around this broad statement of principle, the Congress of American Artists has built its program.

The artists are holding closed sessions June 7 and 8, joining with the writers in a panel Sunday afternoon on the subject, "Art and Society." The three main panels for dis-

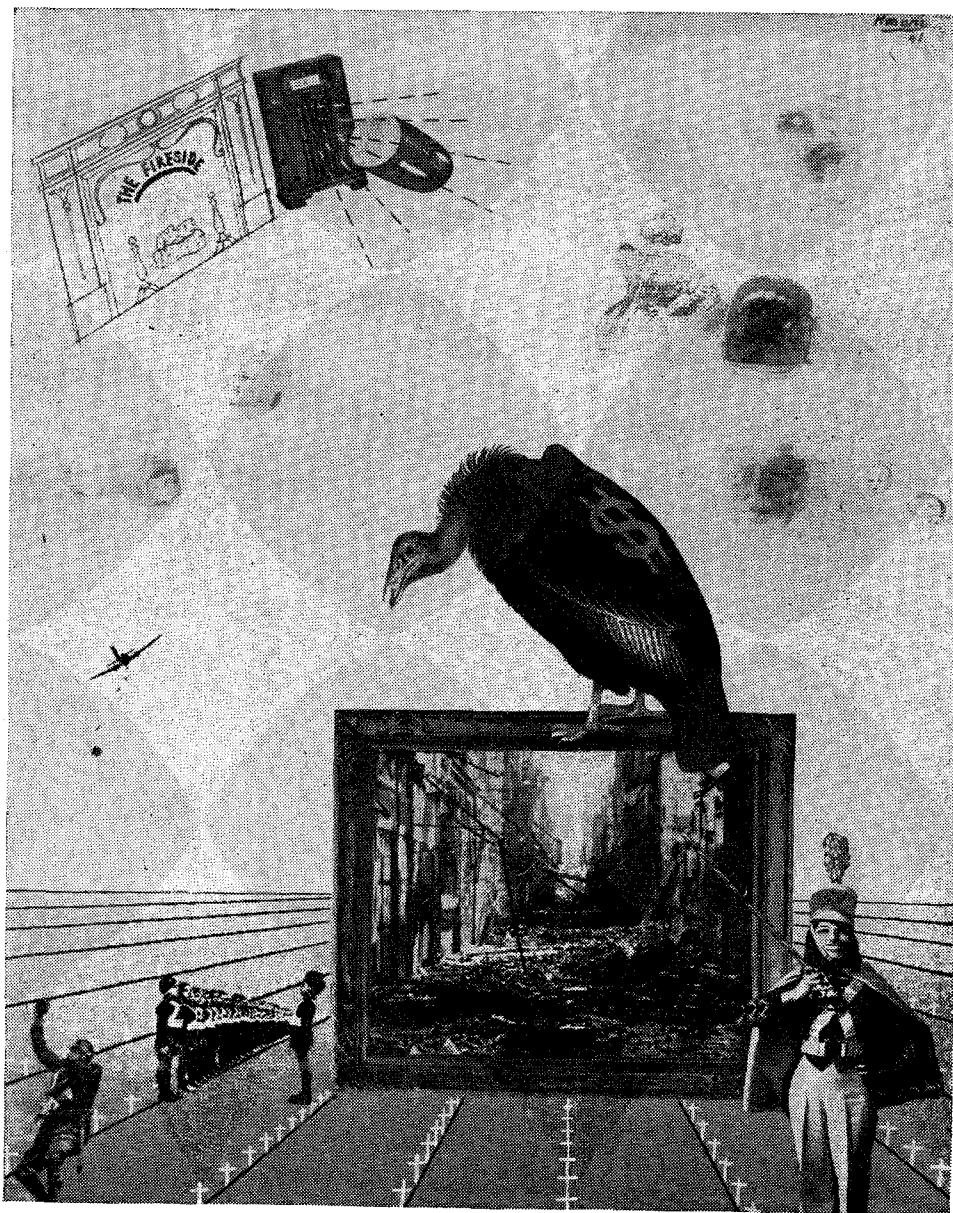


CONGRESS EXHIBITION

(Right) WAR
a collage by
Hananiah Ha-
rari

(Left) 1940
by Herbert
Kallem, in
polychromed
plaster

Below, WPA
ART CLASS by
Sid Gotcliffe



cussion by the artists are: Saturday morning—"Freedom of Expression in Art," with Harry Gottlieb as chairman, Elizabeth McCausland discussing "The Effect of the Art Market on Freedom of Expression"; Chet La More, "Government Patronage and Freedom of Expression"; Louis Lozowick, "A Fascist World and Freedom of Expression"; and Paul Rosenberg, "The Problems of the Refugee Artist." Saturday afternoon—"Criticism and Education in Art," with Bernard Myers as chairman, Jerome Klein discussing "Art Criticism in a Changing World"; Minna Harkavy, "Art Education for Artists"; and Lou Block, "Art Education for the Public." Sunday morning—"Economic Status of American Artists," with H. Glintenkamp as chairman, Daniel Koerner discussing "WPA Art Projects"; Robert Cronbach, "Section of Fine Arts and Other Government Activities"; Harry Sternberg, "The Artist in Private Industry"; and Morris Neuwrith, "New Horizons in Private Industry."

From the discussion at these panels and from the business sessions, a program of action will be evolved by means of which artists may be enabled to work more effectively for the broad objectives outlined in the call. An immediate cause for congratulation, as the Congress opens, is that crisis has brought writers and artists together in a unity apparently not possible before. Even closer collaboration between writers and artists is to be desired, and steps toward this end no doubt will be taken at the Congress.

An urgent problem confronting artists is the plight of their fellows who are refugees from wartorn countries. The case of Picasso has been headline news. This sixty-year-old leader of modern painting is being terrorized by the Nazis in occupied Paris. Picasso is but one of many artists across the Atlantic who are suffering. Today there are considerable numbers of artists interned in Canada, having been sent there from England. In France, many anti-fascist artists are open to persecution perhaps even greater than that leveled at Picasso, whose international reputation to a measure protects him. Who will fight the cause of these victims of brutality and terrorization except their fellow-artists? To meet this problem, a committee for refugee artists is to be formed.

A tangible demonstration of the abhorrence in which artists hold war and all its creatures is the anti-war exhibition being held during the Congress. Despite short notice, about sixty painters, sculptors, graphic artists, and photographers are exhibiting work. Even in these hours of crisis, the creative spirit reaches out for that which alone endows life with meaning, passionate faith in the significance and value of human thought and endeavor. Artists are bound also to reflect the spirit of the hour; their work today is sober, if unterrified. The grays and the blacks rule in these tragic transitional times. In these times, also, the freedom to work is stolen from artists, even as civil liberties are stolen from too many citizens. What artists cry out for is freedom to live

peaceably and happily, to do the best work they can, and to make an immortal affirmation of faith in life.

LYND WARD.

Neptune's Pets

The slippery quickies are still with us—and so is Mr. Mature.

THERE'S a hole in the bottom of the sea. Far out in the beautiful blue ocean there is a five-mile depth you could drown the Alps in. It's too far down for the slithery octopus and the slimy giant squid, and no submarines have ever explored it. Into that black pit no sunlight ever comes. But if you could ever get to the floor of that abyss, dear reader, you would find eight Hollywood studios planted in the ooze, hard at work producing quickies. They like it there because it is the lowest they can get.

As no major pictures opened this week, your reviewer decided to visit the quickie houses, a thing she has not done since Boris Karloff abandoned bloodcurdlers for Broadway. Now a quickie, as we all know, is a film produced in about the time it takes a toadstool to sprout. Its budget is small, its cast usually incompetent, its direction desultory, and its script moldy. It exists for two reasons; the more respectable of them is the usefulness of the quickie as a training school for new directors and performers. But the other, the basic reason, is the double feature and block-booking. The double feature creates an opportunity for passing off junk in company with a more desirable film, and block-booking compels the exhibitor to accept all a company's junk in order to get its better films. Consequently there is no compulsion on the major companies to produce more than a few really entertaining films. For the rest of their product, anything goes.

It is, of course, true that fine films can be made on a hundred thousand dollars or less, with an unknown cast. Few of the great

French films cost any more than a Hollywood cops-and-robbers stinkeroo. Most of the money spent on the *Gone With the Wind* sort of thing is sheer waste anyhow, or at best merely buys real lace for the gown the heroine wears falling off the cliff. And such directors as Garson Kanin and more recently Preston Sturges have turned quickies into whirlwind successes. All this, however, does not alter the fact that most quickies come out of the hole in the bottom of the sea, and I will undertake to run you up a better film with Grandfather's old magic-lantern than Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer turns out in such an opus as, for instance, *Washington Murderdrama*.

Notice the title, first. In what frightful underground den did the fiendish producer sacrifice the virgin body of the English language upon his unholy altar, to think up that one? And (if you're foolish enough to go see it) notice the way in which all the tried-and-true elements have been mingled by the low cunning of some troglodyte. Boys (you can almost hear the producer say), this picture must have *everything* the bargain basement's got. We'll murder a blonde cutie. We'll reform a selfish wife. We'll cook up a newspaperman with a jutting jaw. We'll have a lovely young girl save her daddy from disgrace—I got it! We'll top everything off with some juicy war propaganda!

But, Mr. Mister (some yes-man dares to murmur), we gotta think about the box-office. You know the returns on *I Wanted Wings* ain't quite—

So what? says the producer. They don't like the propaganda, we'll jazz it up for them. We'll put in a night club scene—you know, a song-and-dance act, also some cute aerial photography, chorus girls arranged in a star pattern. Tell you what, we'll be original. We'll put a swimming pool in the night club, and we'll put the chorus in the swimming pool!

Mr. Mister (breathes Sammy Stooze reverently), you have made film history!

So the writers rush off to do the script, and two-and-a-quarter hours later the film opens on Broadway. There, folks, you have *Washington Murderdrama*. It is only necessary to add that the picture's one chance to be interesting is thrown away by having the murder committed in full view of the audience; you can't even wonder whodunit. Poor Frank Morgan, looking rather worn, wambles around in his hopeless part, and Ann Rutherford is the lovely young girl. She's a pretty terrible actress, full of coy wriggles, but she looks good in that company. The film's stalwart young men all talk through their noses in a hysterical staccato.

Then there is *Power Dive*. This one has airplanes. Then there is *Border Vigilantes*. This one has horses; and if you think I am going to waste any more of the language Shakespeare wrote in on either of them, you are probably the guy who believed every word of the President's speech.

By far the most entertaining thing that happened around here this week was not a film; it was the behavior of a repulsive young



VICTORIA HORNE AND RALPH MORRISON in a scene from "Zero Hour."

man named Victor Mature, who is being served up as a skinful of sex appeal. Having appeared in several bad movies, Mr. Mature is within the province of this reviewer, who would trade her rights in him for enough fertilizer to nourish the snapdragons in her windowbox. It seems Mr. Mature had his appendix out a little while ago, pickled it in preservative, and auctioned it off for the benefit of Britain. One vestigial organ helping another, huh? Without further comment on this delightful episode I pass to Mr. Mature's Thursday night endeavors. They announce he will kiss anybody in Madison Square Garden, at a dollar a throw, also for British relief. In case you are wondering what kind of house we are all living in, brothers and sisters, just be polite and call it capitalism.

JOY DAVIDMAN.

"Zero Hour"

The New Theater League presents a timely drama.

THE present repository of progressive theater—of the vital theater that says what should be said, and says it ably—is the growing group of little theaters all over the country that are associated with the New Theater League. The latest, and one of the best NTL productions is the Albert Maltz-George Sklar drama, *Zero Hour*, which the New Theater of Manhattan is offering these Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights at Transport Hall in New York. Top prices, \$1.10.

Zero Hour is being presented all over the country these days—although the larger newspapers do not mention it. It needs to be seen, and with increasing frequency. In military parlance the phrase designates the pre-arranged moment of an attack. The implications of the drama are obvious—America faces the zero hour, the moment when our native reactionaries will strike at everything we love in our country: freedom of speech, of conscience and assembly, the right of collective bargaining, the right to remain at peace.

The authors have liberally rewritten and brought up to date their original script, *Peace on Earth*. Presented in five scenes with one intermission, it is continuously interesting; it is full of the juice of life, and it is ably executed. These ideas—civil liberties and the struggle for peace—are difficult to dramatize successfully, because they embrace so wide and complicated a grouping of human aspirations and tendencies. The audience is required to have some understanding of political processes—some political education. This is at least true of the drama Mr. Maltz and Mr. Sklar have written. But to their credit it must be said, and despite an apparently unavoidable oversimplification of the issues, *Zero Hour* generally succeeds in stating, in terms of human character and emotion, ideas which are more readily grasped when they are printed.

Paul Evarts, professor of sociology, is the

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traditional liberal man of good will. Bitter and disillusioned by the destruction rampant in the world, he is an easy prey to defeatism and paralysis of action. He has done his stint in helping liberal and progressive causes, and he has his "own" work to do. He is faced with the problem of a young son who, deluded by specious thinking is ready to join the Royal Canadian Air Force. His old classmate, Hugh Franklin, labor organizer, meets with powerful resistance when he tries to enlist Evarts in the formation of a citizens' committee to defend striking steel workers. Enrolled against his will, Evarts is immediately drawn into organizational activity.

Refused a permit for a meeting to support the strikers, his committee holds its meeting on the street. It is broken up and Franklin receives injuries from which he eventually dies. The liberal minded citizens are jailed, booked, and fingerprinted, pushed around. Free speech in Paul Evart's town has been abolished under a decree of martial law. Evarts himself narrowly escapes lynching at the hands of his "amiable" and alcoholic mates of the Class of '16. He goes on with his work, however, strengthened in his determination by what he has learned of the forces that oppose human dignity, and reinforced by other colleagues and his own son.

The drama is, in places, slow; in others inadequately motivated. But the total impact is profoundly stirring. For this is one instance where occasional bad writing and acting that is merely on a level of general competency, fail to mar a play that carries true emotional content and intellectual integrity. A more professional company, a more stringent editing of the script, could result in a walloping performance whose influence would be felt more widely.

But I urge you to see *Zero Hour*. Unpretentiously set and intelligently directed by Donald Murray, it is a real evening in the theater. It takes its audience and makes them live with the characters of the drama; it endears these characters to its audience. Particularly effective are the performances of Ralph Morrison as Paul Evarts, Bob Howard as his son, Victoria Horne as his wife (she has perhaps watched Aline MacMahon a bit too closely), Robert Simon as the labor organizer, and Charles Thompson as a police sergeant.

There are many other characters in the play that ably point up the conflicting forces of our time: the liberal-minded professor who is too fearful of his job to stand up to his principles; the old professor with the bitter tongue who, faced with a showdown, throws in his lot with the people; the respectable aged lady, descendant of the American Revolution who believes in the principles of the Bill of Rights, when many of her contemporaries prefer to be identified with the reactionary DAR; the "modern" fascist industrialist who announces that he is an anti-fascist. Together these people present a recognizable segment of our life, as it is lived in these days when the zero hour draws close.

ALVAH BESSIE.

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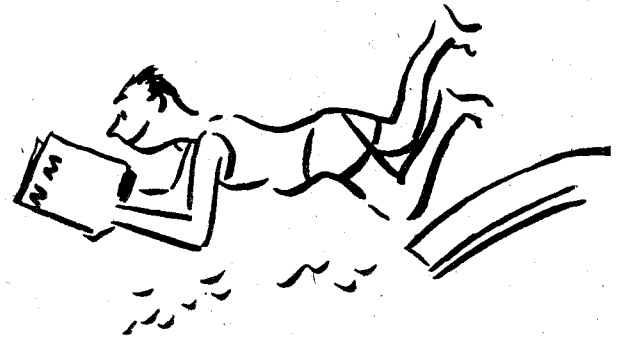
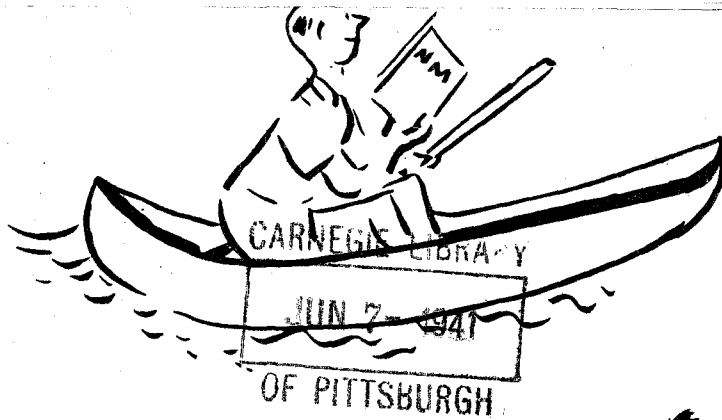
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